

Stageland

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MAY 1912

THE
BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE



HENRY MULLER

"IN HER RIDING HABIT SHE WAS SUPERB"

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THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

The Blue Book Magazine

For June

"A GIRL IN A MILLION" has been chosen to entertain you next month. "She" is a delightful novelette by William Wallace Cook, a tale of the real, present-day West. Besides the Girl herself, the story tells of a number of other interesting people, each with a character of his own, who play important parts in the drama. Chief among them is a fine, manly young mining engineer, who fights his way through the difficulties that confront him, in a most thrilling fashion. It all makes a spirited, adventurous, romantic narrative, and we are confident that you will vote it a story in a million, too. Then there will be a lot of other good stories—over twenty, in all. For instance, there will be an especially remarkable "Mystery of the Sea," a second adventure of "The Three Musketeers of Baseball," another exploit of "The Diplomatic Free Lance," and the first of a splendid new series of business-adventure tales called "The Trackless Jungle." These are all true BLUE BOOK stories; and you will find our June issue a treasure-house of entertainment.

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JOHN and ETHEL BARRYMORE, as Mr. and Mrs. Hypphen-Brown, in "A Slice of Life." Photograph by White, N. Y. Copyright, 1912, by Charles Frohman.

"A Slice of Life"

By J. M. Barrie

In this burlesque of the modern problem play, MR. HYPHEN-BROWN and MRS. HYPHEN-BROWN, together with their maid-servant FREDERIKA, find themselves confronted by many seemingly grave and serious perplexities. Quite in the manner of the heavy and doleful "Drama of the Doldrums" they hold many painful conversations and worry terribly over the states of their souls. Nothing *real* happens, however, except the amusement which is developed at the satirical mockery at the conventional problem play. And in the end MRS. HYPHEN-BROWN is compelled to confess to her delighted husband that she has had no purple past—that all their anxieties and soul-questionings and troublous talks have been mere words, words, words, signifying nothing—beyond the facts that life is rather simple after all and that the drama of the day has its humorous aspects.

Produced by Charles Frohman



HATTIE WILLIAMS, as Frederika, with ETHEL and JOHN BARRYMORE, as Mr. and Mrs. Hyphen-Brown, burlesquing the experiences of, state to take the center of the stage, in 'A Slice of Life,' take-off on the modern problem play, 'A Slice of Life,' photograph by White, New York. Copyright, 1912, Charles Frohman.



TWO BARRYMORES—JOHN, as Mr. Hyphen-Brown, and ETHEL, as Mrs. Hyphen-Brown,
in J. M. Barrie's satirical drama, "A Slice of Life." Photograph by White, New York.
Copyright, 1912, Charles Frohman.



A scene from J. M. Barrie's travesty, "A Slice of Life." HATTIE WILLIAMS,
as Frederika, and ETHEL BARRYMORE, as Mrs. Hyphen-Brown.
*Photograph by White, New York. Copyright,
1912, by Charles Frohman.*

"Hokey Pokey"

By Edgar Smith and E. Ray Goetz

Music by John Stromberg, A. Baldwin Sloane and W. T. Francis

At the Place de l'Opera in Paris, and later at MRS. WALLINGFORD GRAFTER'S villa in the suburbs, there occurs a most amazing series of events, JEREMIAH McCANN, who is a stranger in Paris, MEYER BOCKHEISTER and MICHAEL DILLPICKLE (Messrs. Field and Weber), JOSH KIDDER (William Collier), PIERRE POISSON (George Beban), PEACHIE MULLEN (Fay Templeton), MRS. WALLINGFORD GRAFTER (Lillian Russell), and many other curious personages come on the scene and find themselves entangled in a strange complication of circumstances. Eventually, of course, these are straightened out to the satisfaction of all concerned. Among the songs which diversify this reminiscent *mélange* are "Come Down, My Evening Star," "Rosie," and "Señorita." And among the most remarkable scenes is that in which MESSRS. BOCKHEISTER and DILLPICKLE, disguised with much white paint, pose as that well-known piece of sculpture, "The Dying Gladiator."

Produced by Weber and Fields



GEORGE BEBAN, as Pierre Poisson; LEW FIELDS, as Meyer Bockheister; and JOE WEBER, as Michael Dillpickle, in a scene from "Hokey Pokey." Photograph by Byron, New York.



FAT TEMPLETON, JOE WEBER, LEW FIELDS and LILLIAN RUSSELL, in "Hokoy Pokoy," the new Weber and Fields show. Photograph by Draper, New York.



JOE WEBER and LEW FIELDS, in "Hokey Pokey."
Photograph by Byron, New York.



LILLIAN RUSSELL, as Mrs. Wallingford Grafton, and WILLIAM COLLIER,
as Josh Kidder, in "Hokey Pokey." Photograph by
Byron, New York.



The cast of "Oliver Twist." From left to right, seated, are: LYN HARDING and NAT C. GOODWIN; above them are FULLER MELLISH and CONSTANCE COLLIER; standing in the first row are JANE WILSON, ALICE DELMORE, PERCIVAL VIVIAN, and GERTRUDE BOSWELL; in the last row are FRANK LYONS, PERCEVAL CLARK, and ALFRED HUDSON.



This side of the picture shows: (reading from left to right) MARIE DORO and OLIVE WYNDHAM, seated; standing just behind them are CHARLES ROGERS, CHARLES HARBURY, SUZANNE SHELTON, and COURTENAY FOOTE; behind these are ADA CLIFFORD and ALFRED GRAY.

Photograph by White, New York.



LYN HARDING, as Bill Sykes, and MARIE DORO, as Oliver Twist, in "Oliver Twist." Photograph by White, New York.

"Oliver Twist"

By Charles Dickens

Dramatized by Comyns Carr

OLIVER TWIST is an orphan boy who has been brought up in a "home," and then apprenticed to an undertaker, from whom he runs away. In the streets he meets a boy, known as "The Artful Dodger," who takes him to FAGIN, a man who maintains a "fence" and who conducts a sort of school for teaching the gentle art of pocket picking. FAGIN compels poor OLIVER TWIST to stay with him, and a little later, when the "Artful Dodger" is caught picking a pocket, the blame is thrown on OLIVER. The gentleman who has been robbed, however, Mr. Brownlow, does not believe in OLIVER'S guilt and taking him to his own home, adopts him. Meanwhile, MONKS, who is really OLIVER'S half-brother, plots to get him back to FAGIN, in order that OLIVER may be made a thief and thus lose his share of the paternal inheritance. OLIVER is entrapped, and compelled by FAGIN to assist at the robbing of MRS. MAYLIE'S cottage. He gives the alarm, is shot by BILL SIKES, one of FAGIN'S gang, and is taken in and cared for by MRS. MAYLIE. NANCY, the sweetheart of BILL SIKES, exposes MONKS' plot. SIKES kills NANCY when he learns she has betrayed them, and when he is about to be caught by the police, commits suicide. OLIVER recovers; his real honesty is eventually established; and his heritage is also assured him.

Produced by Liebler & Co.



The Dickens Centenary production of "Oliver Twist." CONSTANCE COLLIER, as Nancy; LYN HARDING, as Bill; NAT C. GOODWIN, as Fagin; CHARLES ROGERS, as The Artful Dodger; PERCIVAL VIVIAN, as Charley Bates; and MARIE DORO, as Oliver Twist. Photograph by White, New York.



OLIVE WYNNDHAM, as Rose; COURTENAY FOOTE, as Harry Maylie; and
HOWARD GOULD, as Monks, in "Oliver Twist."
Photograph by White, New York.



A scene from "Oliver Twist." CHARLES HARBURY, as Mr. Brownlow; MARIE DORO, as Oliver; JANE WILSON, as Mrs. Baldwin; and FULLER MELLISH, as Mr. Grimwig.
Photographed by White, New York.

"Over the River"

Book by H. A. Du Souchet

Music by John L. Golden

MADISON PARKE sets out to make a night of it at the Café Cabaret in New York; and aided by the "Berlin Madcaps" and other sportive spirits of the Gay White Way, he carries his jamboree so far that it eventually lands him in jail. The merry MADISON now becomes the melancholy MADISON, for he is sentenced to thirty days on Blackwell's Island—"Over the River." In this durance vile he is most unhappy. There are bars all around him, but he can't get a drink; moreover, he gets tired of his striped suit, for he just can't wear it out. At last, however, cheered on by the songs of his fellow captives, PARKE is released from the surveillance of WARDEN VOKES and goes back to the bosom of his anxious family. He assures them that he has merely been away on a business trip to Mexico, and MRS. PARKE forthwith arranges a fête to celebrate his return. Assisted by MYRTLE BILLTOPPER, BISMARCK HERRING, HUDSON RIVERS and other jocund friends of the family, a pleasant party is arranged and in the merriment which follows PARKE drowns the recollection of his enforced sojourn "Over the River."

Produced by Florence Zeigfeld, Jr.



EDDIE FOY, as Madison Parke, and the Doll Chorus, in "Over the River." Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.



EDDIE FOY, as Madison Parke, and MAUDE LAMBERT, as Mrs. Madison Parke, in a scene from "Over the River." Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.



LILLIAN LORRAINE, who is now appearing with EDDIE FOY in "Over the River." Photograph by White, New York.



A scene from "Over the River:" EDDIE FAY, as Malison Park, and eight ladies of the chorus.
Photograph by McAlister Studio, Chicago.



ELSIE FERGUSON, as Dolly Todd, and GEORGETTE PASSEDOIT, as Clotilde, in "The First Lady in the Land." Photograph by White, New York.

"The First Lady in the Land"

By Charles Nirdlinger

DOLLY TODD keeps a boarding-house in Philadelphia, and AARON BURR, U. S. Senator from New York, is one of her boarders. BURR introduces JAMES MADISON, a Congressman from Virginia, to DOLLY, and presently the young Virginian declares his love for her. DOLLY, however, has cherished a budding love for BURR and therefore bids MADISON wait. The young Senator is elected Vice-President and plots with SIR ANTHONY MERRY, the British Ambassador, for the seizure of Mexico. DOLLY begs BURR to desist from his intrigue—in vain. Learning of a supposed insult to DOLLY, BURR challenges ALEXANDER HAMILTON to a duel. DOLLY intervenes; BURR promises her there shall be no harm done—and then kills HAMILTON in the duel. DOLLY now turns from the traitorous Vice-President and engages herself to JAMES MADISON, who has now become Secretary of State. BURR does not lose hope of winning DOLLY, however, and even after she has married MADISON he visits her and begs her to join him in his flight—for his schemes have gone wrong and men are coming to arrest him. Sadly, for she has always kept a sisterly affection for the gallant but perfidious BURR, DOLLY sends him away and he bids her farewell forever. Not long afterwards, as the wife of the President, DOLLY MADISON becomes "The First Lady in the Land."

Produced by H. B. Harris



FREDERICK PERRY, as Aaron Burr, and ELSIE FERGUSON, as Dolly Todd
—afterwards Dolly Madison—in a scene from Act II of "The First Lady
in the Land." Photograph by White, New York.



This and the picture on the opposite page show the scene in Dolly Todd's Philadelphia boarding house, which



opens Charles Nirdlinger's historical comedy, "The First Lady in the Land." *Photograph by White, New York.*

"Baron Trenck"

By Felix A. Albini

Book by A. M. Wilner and R. Bodansky

Lyrics by Frederick F. Shrader. Adapted by Henry Blossom

BARON TRENCK is a dashing Austrian cavalry officer of the time of the Empress Maria Theresa. Soon after the play opens—at the marriage feast of a peasant couple named MARIZA and NIKOLA—the gallant BARON rescues COUNTESS LYDIA from the clutches of the notorious bandit ALLA WANZA. TRENCK falls deeply in love with the fair COUNTESS LYDIA and swears that he will marry no one else, but for a time the lady looks askance at the BARON'S record as a Don Juan; then, when that objection has been overcome, it is discovered that the Empress has commanded LYDIA to marry the MARQUIS D' AUCUNTERRE, the French Ambassador to America. So the outlook is dark for TRENCK, particularly as the imperious queen has required that he marry within a year on pain of losing his estates. The hapless BARON feels that he must submit to the royal will and so it happens that he is offered as the prize at a matrimonial raffle to which all the ladies of the court take tickets. Here Cupid, or the Goddess of Chance, or some other Olympian power interferes; for it is none other than the COUNTESS LYDIA who draws the winning number, and so MARIA THERESA is obliged to sanction the long-deferred wedding of these two noble lovers. Especially notable features of this musical play are the court minuet and the song "My Heart Is All Mine Own."

Produced by F. C. Whitney



A scene from the new comic opera, "Baron Trenck." BLANCHE DUFFIELD, as Lydia; JOHN SLAVIN, as Nikola; and PERLE BARTI, as Mariza. Photograph by White, New York.



A scene from F. C. Whitney's new comic opera, "Baron Trench," the minuet in the palace of the
Empress Maria Theresa, of Austria. Photograph by White, New York.



FRITZ STURMFELS, as Baron Trenck, and BLANCHE DUFFIELD, as Lydia,
in the new comic opera, "Baron Trenck." Photograph by
White, New York.



"Officer 666" Act I. PERCY AMES, as Barnes; FRANCIS D. MCGINN, as Phelan; and WALLACE EDDINGER, as Gladwin. Photograph by White, New York.

"Officer 666"

By Augustin Mac Hugh

A wealthy young chap named TRAVERS GLADWIN returns from a thrill-seeking expedition to Europe only to receive the shock of his life in his own home: a young lady named HELEN BURTON calls and announces herself as the *fiancée* of "TRAVERS GLADWIN." She further informs him that she is to elope with "MR. GLADWIN" that very night and that they are to take with them a number of the valuable paintings which adorn the Gladwin domicile. Realizing that he has to deal with a clever crook who has been impersonating him, the real TRAVERS GLADWIN—who has precipitately fallen in love with the innocent HELEN BURTON and wishes to save her the scandal of police interference—goes out and bribes MICHAEL PHELAN, "OFFICER 666," to lend him his uniform. Thus disguised as a policeman, GLADWIN lies in wait for the thief and presently ALFRED WILSON, the crook who has been impersonating GLADWIN, comes in and commences cutting the pictures out of their frames. GLADWIN attempts to arrest WILSON, but meanwhile BATAETO, the valet, has summoned the real police, and, when these arrive, WILSON manages for a time to convince them that he is GLADWIN and that that gentleman is the thief. Then GLADWIN'S friend, WHITNEY BARNES, arrives with the announcement that HELEN'S aunt is on her way to stop the proposed elopement and matters are still more surprisingly complicated. At last, Police Captain STONE recognizes WILSON as a crook, but before he can be arrested WILSON hides in an old chest; and a little later, while the police are searching elsewhere, the desperate thief covers GLADWIN with a revolver, deprives him of "OFFICER 666's" uniform, and in that disguise makes good his escape. HELEN, however, discovers that she likes the real GLADWIN even better than the impostor, so eventually all ends well.

Produced by Cohan and Harris



GEORGE NASH, as the crook, Alfred Wilson, in Augustin Mac Hugh's melodramatic farce, "Officer 666." Photograph by White, New York.



A scene from "Officer 666." VIVIAN MARTIN, as Sd. Sm. I.; PERCY AMES, as Whitney
 BROWN, as Mr. Burton; CAMILLE CRUME, as Mrs. Burton; FRANCIS J. MC GINN, as Michael Phelan;
 RUTH MAYCLIFFE, as Helen Burton; and WALLACE EDDINGEN, as Travers Gladwin.
 Photograph by White, New York.



"Officer 666." Act II: WALLACE EDDINGER, as Travers Gladwin; GEORGE NASH, as Alfred Wilson; and RUTH MAYCLIFFE, as Helen Burton. Photograph by White, New York.

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VOL. XV

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No. 1

The Secret Room

By HELEN TOMPKINS

LIKE BLUEBEARD, Drennan Scott has a room in his mansion at Deephurst, which he allows no one to enter; even his fiancée, the beautiful Eleanor Harmon, promises not to cross the threshold. Scott presents his bride with a priceless string of pearls brought from India. And immediately thereafter, exciting events occur which are only equaled in interest by the strange happenings which take place at the wedding—and which lead to the disclosure of the mystery of the secret room. It all makes a most vivid and absorbing story.—The Editor.

CHAPTER I—THE WARNING

A LARK, almost out of sight in the clear blue sky overhead, sang the first strains of his morning-hymn to the dawn. The sun's first rays kindled a light in the young girl's clear eyes; her hair rivaled its summer gold. "You are utterly unreasonable," she was saying, but her voice was calmer than her face. "You have asked me a question, Mr. Deepford, and I have answered it frankly if regretfully. I care for you very much as a friend—but that is all."

"I asked you another question also, you may remember—one which you did not see fit to answer. It was quite as important in its way—at least quite as important to you—as the other. I will repeat it. Is it your intention to marry Drennan Scott?"

The girl's face whitened and a part

of the glow died out of it. "You are most certainly doing much to forfeit your claim to the title of gentleman when you ask that question," she said, —speaking, however, quite as calmly as she had spoken before. Her eyes kindled into sudden flame and her thin nostrils were dilated as she raised her proud little head.

"Mr. Scott has not seen fit to ask me to marry him."

"He is meaning to do so. When he does—"

"There are bounds which even an ordinary man finds set for him—if he is *not* a gentleman," the girl said still composedly, with a deadly calm which hurt him worse, she knew, than any bitter words could have done. "I have been more patient with you, Mr. Deepford, than I ever was with any

man before. As I told you just now, you have already forfeited—"

"If I have really quite forfeited the insane hope that you might some day come to care for me in the way that I had dreamed, I have nothing more to dread," said Allen Deepford stonily. He thrust vindictively with his stick at the clover-heads as he spoke, so vindictively that the faint, summer fragrance of the flowers rose between them like an invisible barrier. "I *know* Scott, Miss Harmon. I know him to be unworthy—"

"Hush!" she said sternly. "He is your friend, is he not?" She did not glance at him, but her face was as cold and empty of feeling for him as her words had been.

"He *was* my friend!" The correction was made miserably enough. "Scott, as it happens, has everything that I lack, Miss Harmon—money, position, friends, *hope*. Is he also to have that greater gift of all, beside which, so far as I am concerned, all other things are mean and worthless?"

The sullen bitterness in his cry wrung a word or two of pity from the young girl's lips. "Drennan Scott and I are good friends," she said gently. "He has asked for nothing but my regard, Mr. Deepford. I gave him that quite as freely as I gave the same gift to you. Nothing more."

"I neither want your friendship nor your regard," said Deepford morosely. "You know that now, and have known it all the time. I have, unfortunately, made no secret of my love for you."

He had stretched out his arms again hungrily—his dark face convulsed with yearning. But the girl shook her head. "I am going back to the house now," she said decidedly. "You had better avoid me as much as possible for the future, Mr. Deepford—for my own sake as well as yours. I am sorry—"

"And for his sake—as well?" asked the young man still bitterly. "I dare say that is what you would like to add—if maidenly delicacy had not sealed your lips. Your other lover is to be considered, it seems—his wishes consulted—no matter what those wishes should chance to be. Listen to me, Miss Harmon—Eleanor—"

"I will *not* listen when you speak to me of love—still less when you so far forget yourself as to traduce and insult a gentleman to whom you owe better treatment!" She spoke in a gentle voice, but she thrust him roughly aside when he would have caught her hands in his. "Two subjects are not to be discussed between us, sir—love and hate."

"Wait a moment!" the man begged passionately. "Only wait! I must try to find words for what I have to tell you. And it is not easy!"

She waited. The lark had ceased his morning-song and the sun rose higher. It made a glory of her fresh, young face and set a halo about her fair head like the halo which surrounded the heads of the blessed saints in the old pictures. "Well, I am waiting!" she said at last, still gently. But he noticed that a breath of uneasiness stirred in the quiet voice.

"Two years ago, Scott and I went to Jawnpore together—as you know. He was older than I—graver, wiser, the born leader in everything. We were together all through that tempest-in-a-téapot affair—the periodical uprising of a mercurial people—the feeble revolt of a handful of natives belonging to the lower classes of Jawnpore, against the Rajah, and the authority of the English Empress for which the rule of the Rajah of Jawnpore stood. It was hell for a little while—"

Something—a breath—for closely as the man was watching his companion, he could not tell what it was—passed like a curious flaw across the girl's quiet, slightly-pale face. "You were his *protégé* then—Drennan Scott's—just as you are his guest and a member of his household now, are you not?" she asked uneasily. "Is it necessary, or fitting, that I should hear all this?"

Some of the emotion had died out of Deepford's face, leaving it cold and empty. It was grave still, and very anxious, but it was neither hard nor bitter as he looked at her. "It is necessary—but not fitting," he admitted coldly. But under that coldness the girl knew that a volcano was raging.

She nodded but still watched him as quietly as she had watched him from the very beginning.

"The Rajah was rather a good sort. He had taken a degree at Oxford, and was a very ambitious, hard-bitted chap in the beginning. That was long before my time, of course—or Scott's either, for the matter of that. But India, which after all was said and done, was home, managed to suck him dry of ambition, ideals, manhood, self-respect. It is a country which is rather good at that sort of thing. He had grown gross, heavy-witted and obese, the Rajah of Jawnpore had, when I knew him. He had his gems—his intrigues—his horses, of which he was inordinately proud—his women—"

He stopped short, checked by something—he could scarcely have told what—plainly visible in the face of the girl before him. He looked nervously backward over his shoulder as if some one had spoken to him. But only the clover, bending before the touch of the gentle summer breeze in waves of rose-crested foam, met his suspicious gaze. They were quite alone.

"We were together a great deal in the beginning—the Rajah, Scott and I. Sudden with the fatalism of the Hindoo, the Rajah scorned to take the few necessary precautions which might have safeguarded his own life—which he knew would early pay the penalty of his Royal mistress' unpopularity if the threatened revolt were to be even momentarily successful. Scott talked to him and so did I—to no avail. In the end Scott tried his best to bully the fellow into flight—until the province of Jawnpore should once more regain its mental balance.

"One night when affairs were a whole lot worse than usual, the Rajah, startled out of his equanimity by the murder of his favorite son, who had been stabbed to the heart on the very steps of the throne, opened his heart to us. He had lost all hope of being able to make his own escape from doomed Jawnpore, and there were only two things that he felt that he could not sacrifice to the natives when he himself should, possibly before a week had passed, give his ruined and gutted palace to the flames. There was a certain dancing girl who had come as a slave into his possession late in his career—

she was beautiful as a vision, so he claimed, slender as a reed and with eyes dark as a deep, leaf-choked pool. He could not leave her helpless, in the brutal hands of his enemies and hers. Moreover, there were the pearls—and all Jawnpore had heard of the Rajah's matchless pearls. He begged Scott by all that he held sacred, to promise that he would flee from the country before it was too late, and that he would carry the woman and the gems with him. After that—

"He waited a little, with that last, fervent prayer upon his terrified lips. He had confided in us alike before—the Rajah had—many times, but that night he looked across at me and his dark face grew darker still. 'What is wrong?' asked Scott sharply, and I knew without watching him, that he too was looking at me as if he had never seen me before and as if I were a stranger to him.

"The Rajah laughed in a nasty fashion that made me rage. After all, I told myself, he was a nigger. What right had he to look at me, a white man, in that cool, contemptuous fashion? 'There's no need of drawing your friend Deepford into this, Scott,' he said shortly.

"I saw Scott redden to the eyes. He was loyal enough to me, to do him justice, and there were only the two of us, you know, against the India that we both knew and the things for which that India stood—thinks unspeakable, sometimes. 'What do you mean?' he asked the Rajah harshly. 'And remember, please, that you are referring to—my friend.'

"'I remember—for the matter of that,' said the Rajah gloomily. His mood had changed again. 'You might as well be patient with me, Scott,' he said. 'What does it matter, after all? A day—a week—and I will be safely past friendship and enmity alike. But we comprehend much, sometimes—we people who come down to look Death in the face and are not afraid. I have begged you to help me, Scott—to help me save the girl—and the gems that may one day be hers, since I have now no son left me to bear my name after I am gone. But I tell you frankly,

I want neither your friend's counsel nor his help!"

"'I had better retire then,' I said. I could have struck the brute in the face and across the lying lips in spite of his canting patter of loyalty and the like. I might have done it, too—had he not looked at me as he did and made no move himself.

"'I have liked you from the beginning, Deepford,' he said to me frankly. 'All along I have liked you far better than Scott—and have trusted you less. I can read you like an open book, my friend, and I tell you that I can see your faults—faults of which as yet you have never dreamed. I might trust you with the woman and find you faithful—but never with the gems.'

"'I had better get out then!' I said for the second time. I was not quite myself, for I had taken a little more wine that night than was good for me. The situation was fast getting on my nerves.

"'Yes, you had better get out,' the Rajah said to me, with a sort of finality that steadied and stunned me somehow. I went without another word. And as I went, I remembered afterwards that Scott had said something to me—that he had cried out—

"Of course I do not know what happened after that. I wandered, it seemed to me for hours, about the filthy streets. I was still sullen, still bitterly angry with the Hindoo and with Scott himself, who had stood idly by. I told myself over and over that when the morning really came—

"But the climax came that night. The natives, a howling, raving, hideous mob, poured over the walls and into the Rajah's palace, and his mutilated body was thrown to the pariah dogs outside. I saw women flung screaming—"

He covered his eyes. Watching him closely with her terrified eyes, the girl saw that his face was wet with perspiration, although the day was still cool. "We made what stand we could—the half-dozen white men left in our quarter of Jawnpore. Thank God, our own women had been sent away long before that—when the first hint of trouble arose. All that night I searched, but I never once caught sight of Scott.

The palace was sacked, gutted and burned, and by morning, with their enemy, the Rajah, gone, the natives were terrified and willing to listen to reason. The danger was past. Within a week things had settled down again and everything had grown quiet.

"It was nearly that long before Scott showed up. Wild with anxiety about him, I had already forgotten my bitter resentment against him that night, and when he walked in on me that morning in the little office, his face haggard and unshaven and his right arm in a sling, I literally hugged him in my delight. 'I had believed you dead, Scott!' I cried. 'Where have you been?'

"'I cannot tell you that, old fellow,' he said, wringing my hand but turning his face away from me. 'I have been away on a secret mission for him—the Rajah, you know. I wish to God that I had never made him that foolish promise! But I did, and there's small use of fretting about it—now.'

"'You saved the woman—did you?' I whispered the question anxiously. 'Where is she—and where are the gems?'

"Scott looked at me oddly. 'We are going to start home to-morrow, Deepford,' he said evasively. 'You must promise me that you will not ask me any questions—it will do no good, for I could not answer them. A couple of fellows are going home with me—an Indian prince and his son. They don't want to go through another native uprising. They came near sharing *his*—the Rajah's—fate.'

"'Where were *you* that night?' I asked. Scott is no coward and no quitter, but I didn't half like the look of things.

"He disregarded my question.

"That is all that I wanted to say, Deepford. Please overlook my discourtesy, if I fail to introduce you to the—two people of whom I spoke just now. I shall have as little as possible to say to them myself. They are high-caste Hindoos, you know—with all sorts of—'

"'I understand,' I said—which was a lie, for I didn't understand in the least what the chap was driving at. 'What about the gems, Scott—I asked you

about them just now, you know. What about the gems—and the woman?”

“The woman? Oh! I have carried out the Rajah’s instructions, you understand—or have done so as nearly as possible. And the gems too—are quite safe. I wish that you could have had a look at the pearls, Deepford. Some day—”

“Are they in your possession?” I asked him bluntly enough. ‘Are you fool enough, Scott—’

“I tell you they are safe enough!” he said impatiently. ‘To-morrow, Deepford, remember? I want to get out of this hole just as soon as possible.’

“We did get out the next day. There were perils enough, however, for the two of us, before that—for Scott especially. He managed to escape poisoning by the narrowest possible squeak, and at the very last, when he fancied himself safest, his *syce* turned on him just before he quitted the house—a man whom he had regarded as a brother. The fellow attacked him in a sort of fury, and had a knife at his throat before I knew it!

“I managed to be quick enough as it chanced. I bent the chap’s arm back until I heard the bone snap, and the dagger—a long knife, razor-keen and sharp as a brier—clattered on the floor. I can recall even yet just how greasy-wet Scott’s face looked, and how terror-stricken he was, with the fellow squirming out from my hold and scrambling to get out of the room. A little later, we heard his naked heels pounding across the stone-flagged court outside. ‘Thank God we’ll be out of this hell and safe under the good old English flag in less than an hour!’ I said to Scott. ‘You are a damned fool to keep those gems about you, old chap.’

“The gems!” Scott looked at me oddly, as if he only half understood just what I was talking about. ‘The gems! Why, of course the beggar was after the gems—naturally. He’ll not get a second chance at me, old fellow—never fear.’

“We sailed that day, and without further molestation. I watched like a hawk, but Scott seemed to have quite forgotten the incident when it was safely past. On the steamer the Indian

prince and his son—so far as I could see—avoided Scott quite as assiduously as they avoided me. They stuck closely to their first-class cabin on pretense that they could not associate with the other passengers without losing caste, and if Scott saw them at all, it was only when it was possible for him to do so without attracting any attention. I did not have my own suspicions aroused—why should I have had?—that the two were any other than they had seemed—two upper-caste Hindoos of wealth and position, who had perhaps made themselves obnoxious to the natives by their friendship with the hated English. But later—”

The girl shivered. A cloud passing over the sun, turned the morning gray and cheerless. From the blue, where the lark had called, a hawk dropped plummet-like, and a mother-bird gave a single, startled, terrified cry.

“They will be waiting breakfast for me—and my aunt doesn’t like to wait,” said the girl, making an effort to appear natural.

The man had grown peevish and sullen, but his sulky fit was evidently not intended for her. He never, apparently at least, faltered in his adoration. “Scott may be able to make his version of it more interesting,” he said resentfully. He flung the words savagely from an aching heart as he saw how little his insinuations had actually meant to her. “I have heard from Jawnpore, Miss Harmon, since we quitted the place—Scott and I. The Rajah’s charge—the girl whom his last moments were spent in providing for—did not meet her death that night in the sacking and burning of the Rajah’s palace. She was not seen afterwards. There were many who were more or less interested in her fate. Yet from that day to this all trace of the woman has been utterly lost. Ask Scott when he comes to woo you, Miss Harmon, *where she is.*”

CHAPTER II

PERFECT TRUST

It was easier for the woman to forget many things than it was to forget

young Deepford's warning, much as she would have liked to have done so. She stayed awake the entire night following the declaration of his love. She was honest enough with herself—she was no child—to admit that Drennan Scott was trembling upon the brink of a declaration also. She was equally honest enough to admit that there could be only one answer to his suit.

"Do you like your mount?" he asked her eagerly the next morning. He patted the mare's silken mane caressingly. "From the beginning I have longed to see you together, Miss Harmon—you and My Lady. I have never seen another woman—I speak quite frankly—whom I would be willing to see ride her."

Eleanor Harmon smiled, even while she flushed at his open admiration—for in her riding habit she was superb. "Not even your sister?" she asked idly.

"Not even Ailsie. My sister is no horsewoman, Miss Harmon, and My Lady is an aristocrat, born and bred. Ailsie would wrench her velvet mouth cruelly—would harass her—would expect her to obey at a word. My Lady is all fire and spirit, Miss Harmon; she must be coaxed—not driven. Some day I hope—"

His lean face flushed even under the coat of tan which his long sojourn in tropical lands had bestowed. The girl's eyes fell under the passion in his own dark ones, and she strove to change the subject. "Your friend has not come," she said gently. "Does he not ride with us to-day—as usual?"

My Lady coquetted under Scott's light touch. She evidently resented some subtle and unknown quality in his bearing or manner, for she reared suddenly and Eleanor Harmon heard the ugly click of teeth as she flicked her soft velvet lips across the young man's sleeve. "Look out!" she cried breathlessly.

But Drennan Scott only laughed. "My Lady and I understand each other," he protested. "It is all pretense on her part, you must know, Miss Harmon—a play to the galleries. As a matter of fact, she is evidently irritated with me about something, although she

wouldn't really harm me for the world. As for Deepford—can *you* give me no explanation of my friend's flight—or is it, his conduct, as inexplicable to *you* as it is to me?"

The girl flushed again. "He said nothing to me about an intended departure," she said.

Scott was slender, well-knit, muscular and graceful. Tall as the girl was, he had the advantage of her by several inches. Now, as he looked down into her eyes, she read the truth in his own. The declaration which she had succeeded in postponing for so long could no longer be averted. It was trembling upon his lips, and after all, he was not the man to be played with. "I love you, Eleanor," he said manfully. "I love you—love you—*love you!* Have you no word of hope for me? Until last night I believed—knowing how little my wealth would weigh in the balance in your dear eyes—that Allen's chances and my own were equal. I—have not been over-confident, dear. On the contrary, I have been very faint-hearted. I am not so sure, dear heart, that you have not sent away the better man of the two. Was it for my sake that you sent him, dear? Tell me, Eleanor, is there any hope—for me?"

The clover bent beneath the love-making of the summer breeze—the clover that was, after all, no pinker than the girl's pink cheeks under her lover's ardent wooing. My Lady turned her deep, startled eyes upon the master, who allowed his own mount to crowd her so closely, and she minced coquettishly like the vain, fine lady that she was. But for the first time she found herself unnoticed.

"I am very sorry about Deepford, dear," said Scott, when the two had grown slightly rational again. "I am very sorry for him."

"Was there a quarrel between you—Drennan?"

The use of his first name, heard for the first time from her sweet lips, threatened to precipitate the two into a state of blissful idiocy again. When this had been with great difficulty narrowly averted, My Lady, her tenderest feelings outraged, looked sus-

piciously from one to the other of the two romantic riders.

"There was, I assure you, no quarrel," said Drennan Scott gravely. "But Deepford's regard for me, intense enough in the beginning, I really believe, has evidently turned to hatred, Eleanor. So much, he was honest enough to tell me frankly. I had not suspected before that he could be so unjust. I did not steal you from him, dear."

"Yet he has some cause for complaint," she said courageously. The girl's eyes had darkened, but they met his own bravely enough. "I am going to be quite frank with you, Drennan. So much I owe to—your friend. I cared more for him, dear, I think, than I ever cared for any other man—except—you. But never—in that way."

"I understand, sweetheart." Scott's face had grown old and haggard. "May I be as perfectly frank with you, Eleanor—and trust you to understand?"

"But—certainly." For the first time the girl's eyes fell before the feeling in his own and they did not meet his quite candidly. The ghost of a suspicion—engendered by Deepford's words—crowded close to her in the warm summer sunlight—between her and her lover—and would not down.

"Then—I am not a youth, Eleanor. I am scarcely so young even as Allen Deepford. There are things which I cannot tell you, dear—questions which you must not ask and which I could not answer even if you did. I could not answer Deepford—"

"Questions about—the Rajah?"

The man's face grew dark, and bitter little lines in it made him look fully his age—and more. "So he told you about *that*, did he," he asked harshly. "That was not playing the game quite fairly, sweetheart." There was something in his voice that made the girl shrink from him. "You must listen to me, Eleanor; for after all, you know, we are little better than utter strangers to each other. You and I have known each other only a year and it is his word against mine, dear heart—and he is no villain, this rival of mine. I want to be quite just to him as well as to myself.

And it is only right for me to remind you, dear, that were I guilty of the sins with which he charges me—lying would mean but little to me and falsehood and deceit would seem small sins. Do you understand?"

She nodded. Her eyes were wide with something which he did not know her well enough to define. Was it dread—distrust—of *him*?

"There is a locked door in my heart, dear; the key of it is lost—forever. There is a locked door—the door of a room there at Deephurst—which you will never enter, no matter why. There are things—do you love me well enough to trust me, Eleanor—not as other, happier women trust their husbands, but implicitly and against your own instinct and your own better judgment?"

"I love you enough to trust you implicitly," she said gently. "But, frankly, I do not like concealment, Drennan. I do not like darkness and deceit—and the things that they stand for. They should have no part in my future life, dear—nor in yours. Tell me honestly, is there a *real* reason for this secret? Is there a *real* reason why I should trust you—and ask no questions?"

"Yes, my dear, there is a *real* reason," he said, speaking quite as gently and as patiently as she. "I like concealment quite as little as you do, Eleanor—believe me. Listen, dear girl. I have never in all my life been false to man or woman. It is no fault of mine that I must ask for trust. It is because I cannot—and must not—break my pledged word sacredly given, that I am asking you now to have faith in me."

For a long moment they rode on in silence under the green bending branches of the trees. The silence grew in time unbearable—at least to him who was risking so much. A shadow crossed the sun.

"Has it—this secret of yours—anything to do with the Rajah of Jawnpore?" the girl asked at last. "Was Mr. Deepford right—so far? Has it anything to do with the mutiny—with the Rajah's pearls—and with the Rajah's beautiful favorite? Has it anything to do with the trust which he committed to your keeping?"

For another moment—a moment

which perhaps seemed longer than it really was—she half believed that after all he did not really mean to answer her. The realization came to her with a sort of sick, helpless terror. When he did speak, his face had quite changed—it was the face of another man entirely and a man whom she did not know. There was a little fleck of crimson on his lips where his teeth had bitten through. And his eyes had changed from dark to quite black—as black as were the Rajah's eyes or as they had been when he had been lying dead in his dishonored garments outside the walls of far-away, fallen Jawnpore, where the pariah dogs had gnawed his bones. "I am trying to make myself quite clear to you, Eleanor," the man said at last. "I never intend, so long as I live, to discuss this subject with you again. Believe me, it is a very unpleasant one to me. As I have already said, you must trust me, dear—must believe that I am a man of honor—must believe that I come to you with clean hands and an unstained name. Are you listening to me?"

He did well to ask the question, for her face was turned quite away from him. But, "I am listening," she said gently.

"I am very sorry, Eleanor, that the seeds of distrust and suspicion had been sowed before I could tell you my side of the matter," he said, still trying to speak patiently. "After all, it's a scurvy trick that Deepford played me while he still pretended to be my friend. It is too late for regrets, however. And the thing must have come to an issue sometime. Sooner or later, the question would have arisen, even had I been willing to marry you—without speaking. You believe that it is best, do you not, dear—that I speak quite frankly?"

"I believe that you should be frank with me—yes," she said, still more gently.

"I am what the world—our world—would call a rich man, Eleanor. I had a comfortable income of my own, even before the death of my uncle made me master of Deephurst and the possessor of an additional ten thousand a year—which I did not and do not need. There is, I repeat it, dear, a suite of rooms at

Deephurst which no one save myself and Rani Sing is ever allowed to enter—and even he, very rarely. If you go there, as Deephurst's mistress, you must promise me that you too will abide by the unwritten law that governs Deephurst—that you too will be content never to cross the threshold of these forbidden rooms."

"I can promise you that—if I ever go," she said quietly. Some of the youth and life and happiness had died out of her young face. "Tell me, Drennan, has no one ever expressed any curiosity in the matter? Have they—those others—been always content to stay outside of—your confidence?"

"My sister was not content to do so," he said sullenly. "You may have heard that Ailsie and I are not—friends, Eleanor. She fancied that it was a whim of mine that kept those doors fast-locked, and that when once she passed beyond the forbidden portals, there would be nothing left for me to do but to forgive her—as I always had, when she had imposed upon my patience and good-nature. This time she chose an occasion when she knew that I would be away from home, and was able in spite of the remonstrance of the servants, to gain entrance to the outer rooms. Fortunately Rani was on guard—fortunately he was faithful to his trust, and fortunately, in spite of all her coaxing and entreaties, he withstood her. My sister Ailsie has a pretty temper, Eleanor—she chose to regard herself as being deeply injured when I praised Rani for his zeal and faithfulness. She claims that he insulted her and she has refused to enter the walls of Deephurst while he remains in my employ. That is all."

"I am sorry to have blundered upon so unfortunate a topic of conversation," said the young girl. "I was only anxious to canvass the matter in all of its bearings, Drennan—that was all. You see, I must know to what I am committing myself, must I not?"

But Drennan Scott's brow did not clear. "You have spoken of the Rajah's pearls, Eleanor," he said gloomily. "I hoped so much from your answer, that I brought them with me—my first gift to the woman whom I love. See, dear,

the stones are for Deephurst's future mistress!"

Her head was slightly bowed. Leaning forward, he looped a splendid rope of priceless, matchless pearls about her slender throat. "How lovely!" she said, fairly overcome by the splendor of the gems. "How *inexpressibly* lovely they are, Drennan. And are they really yours?"

The road had narrowed, so perceptibly that the two were no longer riding abreast. He had been forced to precede her, since he dared not trust My Lady with her unfamiliar burden too far, unknowing what the curving, winding road might hold at the next turning. "The stones are really mine, dear," he said at last. "Or rather, they are mine only provisionally. They will be yours, sweetheart, when you come as a bride to Deephurst. The Rajah was a decent sort, Eleanor—it was his will that under certain exigencies the pearls for which he knew that I must risk so much, were to become my own. I wish to God that he had lived to claim them again!" he suddenly and passionately broke out. "I wish to God that he could have known what they were to cost me! If he had—"

A startled scream from the girl behind him made him wheel so sharply that his horse reared, completely barring the narrow road. It was well that he did so. Eleanor, her face a marble mask of fright and horror, was clinging helplessly to the saddle, her face absolutely colorless, the pearls a little heap of frozen hail-drops in the road directly beneath My Lady's dancing feet. It was all that Scott could do at first to keep the mare from bolting completely. He clung with all his might to the frenzied animal, trying at first ineffectually, to secure the bridle, which had slipped from the girl's helpless fingers.

"For God's sake, what is the matter, Eleanor—*Eleanor?*" he kept saying over and over. "You terrify me, dear. Are you ill—hurt?"

But over and over, at first inarticulately and later only half-distinguishably, she was repeating the same words. "The man behind us!" she shrieked. "The horrible, horrible man! Are you

armed, Drennan? He—means to murder us! Oh, the face—the cruel, cruel face!"

CHAPTER III

THE RAJAH'S PEARLS

For a moment Drennan Scott forgot the fortune in gems lying unnoticed at his feet in the dusty road. Glancing past the mare's shying figure and the girl clinging helplessly and half-fainting to the slipping saddle, he saw that the road behind them both was quite empty. The pines on either side crowded closely and were laced together by intricate patterns of bamboo briers and love-vine; and on the right, the remnant of a ruined *bois-de-arc* hedge—the decaying boundary of an abandoned farm—made the probability of an unseen listener who might have overheard their conversation utterly impossible. And yet to think that the girl herself was mistaken was quite out of the question—and quite as absurdly impossible. She had undoubtedly seen some one who had terrified her.

When My Lady was at last even partially quieted, her tender, velvet mouth was darkly flecked with crimson and even the iron muscles of the man who had fought with her for supremacy ached. He was a little breathless as he tenderly lifted the fainting girl from the saddle. "There is a little thread of cold water back there—comes from a tiny, half-buried spring above the road," he said, as he watched anxiously her effort to regain her self-control. "Are you afraid for me to leave you alone here, dear, while I go and get some?"

But she clung to him, whimpering a little, like a foolish, terrified child. "Please let me go with you, Drennan," she urged tearfully. "I can walk, I think, with a very little help, and I shall be growing stronger every moment, you know. And the pearls—we had better look out for them. I dropped them there on the ground somewhere about here, did I not?"

The man stooped and drew the thread of gold, weighted with its splendid stones, from the dust at their feet. Yet she could not but notice that he

hardly saw them. "I think that I had better keep them myself, Eleanor," he said in a low, remorseful voice. "What about the man, sweetheart? What was there about his appearance to terrify you so? Can you describe him?"

"He was creeping along behind us on foot when I saw him first—slowly and soft-footed. His feet made no more noise than those of a cat would have done. There was something indescribably stealthy, treacherous and tiger-like in his appearance and his movements, Drennan. But I think that it was not *that* that filled me with such terror. It was his face. It was twitching horribly—"

Drennan Scott looped My Lady's bridle across his arm. "Do you think that his features were familiar to you—had you ever seen him before?" he asked—but there seemed a note of indifference in his voice, as if he could foretell her answer.

"Never. He was swarthy—dark, Drennan—too dark for an Anglo-Saxon." She looked up at her lover timidly. "The pearls, dear," she said again more hesitatingly. "Was it the pearls that the man wanted? He looked like an East Indian. Was he going to attack us—for the sake of the gems?"

Scott smiled a little tremulously. "You have been reading fairy tales, Eleanor," he said, but his tenderness robbed the reproof of its sting. "The death of the Rajah left no rightful claimant for the gems. The Rajah had a perfect right to dispose of them as he pleased, and it was his last expressed wish, that I should, granting the existence of certain conditions, keep them as my own. I doubt if anyone even of the Rajah's household—there were few enough of them left after the mutiny, God knows—knew even to whom they were given. And even if they had known and resented my possession of them, it has been more than two years now, since I quitted India. There has been plenty of time for any meditated attempt to deprive me of them to have fully materialized long ago."

The girl's face cleared wonderfully. "It may have been some tramp," she said, only half convinced of the truth of his words. "I wish that you would

be very careful, Drennan—and that you would keep a sharp look-out. Will he follow us, do you think—home?"

They had reached the tiny stream by this time—the merest excuse of a runnel of icy water escaping through moss and fern in a rocky hollow above the road. The girl dipped the little silver cup which her lover gave her, deep in the tiny hollowed-out basin where the cold water was deepest, and drank and bathed her face and hands in the icy flood. But she still started at every sound—the rustle of a bird's wing, the snap of a branch under shy forest footsteps, the flutter of full-grown leaves, the thousand and one sounds with which the forest is full. "I think that I had better go home now, please, Drennan," she said, flinging pretense to the winds at last. "I'm a little over-wrought, dear—"

He nodded. He had stooped, however, and was studying something on the soft, moist ground so closely that she could not even be sure that he had heard her words. "What is it now, Drennan?" she asked breathlessly.

But she hardly needed to ask the question. Impressed deeply in the moist soil where the seeping water crept down, was a single footprint—narrow, high-arched and small—the footprint either of a child, a woman or a man little larger than a half-grown boy. The girl, following the man's glance, and then flashing a quick, suspicious look at his face again, saw that his brow was knitted and that there was not so much perplexity in his features now, as trouble and distress. "Is it *his* footprint—the footprint of the man whom I saw just now and who was following us?" she asked sharply.

Scott pulled himself together with a perceptible effort. "I will take charge of the pearls now myself, Eleanor," he said with a frown. "After all, you are right and the stones might prove to be a source of real danger to you. They were only sent down from town yesterday, and it may be that some one knew and has followed the pearls down to Deephurst. Thieves are very clever and daring, and there is no doubt that they have sources of information of which we never—even the wisest of us—

dream. I will take the pearls back to Deephurst myself and return them to the safety-deposit vaults in town tomorrow."

"Where did he—the thief—go?" asked the girl faintly.

"Who—this man whom you fancied that you saw?"

"Or the woman whom I mistook for a man—yes." The girl bit her lip and flushed scarlet. But Scott showed in his face no consciousness that he attached any particular significance to her words. "I think that he must have plunged into the forest there at the left of the road," he said guardedly. "There is a path a little lower down the hillside that communicates directly with the main road, where it crosses the railway down there near the station."

"I am afraid!" said the girl helplessly. Her face had never regained its color and there were tears in her pretty eyes. "I am afraid for *you*, Drennan—far more than I am for myself."

"You need not be." Her lover looked at her with a new solicitude in his gaze. "It is very sweet to have you alarmed about my safety, Eleanor, but I must not trade upon your pity. I have met danger in too many forms to fear it now, when it skulks like a coward in the under-growth. If the thief—if your intuitions are to be depended upon—risks himself within the boundaries of Deephurst, Rani is devoted to my interests and will know how to deal with him."

He helped her back into the saddle and, still walking himself, with My Lady's bridle looped over his arm, began to lead the way back down the winding road. His own mount, a rangy, raw-boned brute with the temper of a fiend, kept hypocritical and decorous pace with My Lady's mincing gait, and for a little while both the man and woman were quiet. "You have the pearls safe, have you not?" said the girl at last, dropping her voice a little tremulously as if she feared that she might be overheard. She cast a frightened glance backward over her shoulder at the green, sun-flecked lane and started sharply when a faint sound smote upon her ear—the drip of the seeping water over a rocky ledge.

"Yes, I have them quite safe—believe me." Scott touched the breast of his tightly-buttoned coat reassuringly—the place where the Rajah's pearls rested above his heart. "I tell you, you have nothing to fear, Eleanor. No one could be so desperate—"

From the woods on the left of the road where the pines crowded thickest, a shot rang out—a shot that sounded deafening in the young girl's ears. The man who was leading My Lady reeled and pitching forward, fell full-length in the dusty road.

The report and the scream of the girl that mingled with it like a twin echo, set the maddened horses wild. The hard-mouthed brute that Drennan Scott had been riding, already restive under the slow pace to which he had been forced, reared madly, snapped the bridle-rein to which his rider had clung, like a bit of rotten thread, and barely missing the prostrate man with his flying hoofs, was gone up the narrow road like a wraith. My Lady, instead of following suit, after the one involuntary, frightened start that had unseated her own rider and set herself to trembling like a leaf, only stood and snorted with terror.

Still another sound had mingled with the report of the pistol-shot—a sound that had been drowned by that and by the girl's startled cry. It was the noise of hoof-beats on the road. Before the smoke from the weapon which had been discharged had mingled with the clear summer air, two horsemen—their pace quickened by the pistol-shot—spurred their steeds and came at a dead run round the bend in the road.

"What is the matter here?" asked the older of the two men sharply as his single glance took in the form lying helpless in the middle of the road and the almost-fainting girl bending over it. "Miss Harmon—you here? In God's name what has happened?"

"Thank God you have come, Mr. Lehigh!" said the girl, a wave of color coming back to her haggard face. "Some one has shot Mr. Scott—from the copse there at the right of the road. Tell me—is he dead?"

Her words roused the fallen man like a deluge of ice water. With Le-

high's help he managed to stagger to his feet. "I think I'm not even badly hurt," he said weakly. "Of course—I can't be sure, yet. Mr. Lehigh, pay no attention whatever to—the fellow, please. You will never be able to overtake him. I heard him running away as I fell. He must be safely away by now."

"Nonsense, Scott!" said Lehigh's companion energetically. He was a much younger man than Lehigh and his actions were more decided and abrupt. "Look after him, Lehigh. I'll send help from Graham's if he's not already heard the alarm. I ought to overtake the chap—I know a turn that will take me out on the path ahead of him long before he reaches the railroad. He will strike for that, of course, and will expect to be able to catch a chance freight. Can you give me any idea of what he looks like?" Scott shook his head.

"I'm afraid I'm worse hurt than I thought at first," he said more weakly. "He—got me here in the left shoulder, I believe. There's a lot of blood. You fellows will have to help me. Let the chap go, I tell you Henderson. He is armed and desperate—and some one else will be hurt."

He reeled again but caught at Lehigh's arm in time to recover his balance. "You will have to help me until I can get him to Graham's, Henderson," said Lehigh, taking alarm at Scott's lassitude, the frightful amount of blood that he was losing, and his extreme pallor. "You can get a party together there to help you overtake the man you want. Have you any idea what his motive was, Scott?" But Scott only moaned and closed his eyes again. He had fainted.

"He has some very valuable gems—pearls—in his breast pocket," said the girl hastily. "He was showing them to me when I caught sight of the man whom I feel sure is responsible for this outrage. They—the pearls, I mean—were only sent down from town yesterday. Mr. Scott thought—"

"That puts a different face on the matter," said Lehigh sharply. "It may be a deliberately-planned attempt at robbery, with more than one man con-

cerned in it. You say they did not get the pearls? No, I see. I can feel them now inside his coat. But he is fast bleeding to death now, Henderson, and neither of us is armed. We'd better keep together until we reach Graham's."

"All right!" said Henderson, but he shot a keen glance at the girl's terror-stricken face and wide eyes. "You'll have to help lift him again, Lehigh—he can't possibly walk."

"I can walk with a little help," said Scott stubbornly, opening his eyes again. He looked pityingly at the girl. "Don't look so terrified, Eleanor," he whispered. "It is only weakness from loss of blood—that's all—and I have plenty to lose. But listen—" He glanced at the two men, who were, under pretense of securing their own horses, momentarily beyond ear-shot. "For God's sake, dear—for the sake of your own happiness and mine, for the sake of my peace of mind—give the chap a chance to get away. Do you understand?"

Her lips quivered. "He tried to *murder* you, dear," she whimpered dully. "He fully *meant* to murder you. What are gems and money—compared to your life? And that is in jeopardy while he is at large. Remember—"

He groaned. Lehigh and Henderson were coming back—were almost within ear-shot. At a little distance—probably from the Grahams, where the shot and the girl's terrified cry had been heard—some one shouted an inquiry and Henderson answered. The girl only caught the significance, not the words. Her own ears were dulled and all sounds came to her seemingly from a measureless distance. "What am I to do, dear?" she asked helplessly. "What do you *want* me to do?" A horse's feet clattered down the gravelly road beyond Graham's place. "John is fetching a doctor," some one was saying quite near to the girl, but she knew that it was neither Henderson nor Lehigh. "John has gone for Dr. Franks and two of us will look out for Scott. That will leave the rest of you to attend to—no pistols? That's bad! You'd better stop at the house. Tell Mattie to telephone to town and to send another message

to Calhoun. Tell him to get a couple of fellows and to watch the road beyond—"

"They are coming with the litter now, dear," said the girl hurriedly. "You are badly hurt and I am going to take you home with me. No, Drennan—would you rob me of the right to care for you? And there must be no delay."

"Take the pearls!" He thrust his hand in his breast and drew them gently forth—dripping with the crimson flood ebbing fast from a jagged wound in his shoulder. "I want *you* to have the pearls, dear—in case anything happens to me. They are my own, Eleanor—to give or to withhold. And remember, sweetheart, that they are my first gift to my future wife."

The girl shuddered. The blood stained her fingers, and dripping a little faster, dyed her white gown a ghastly hue. "No, *no!*" she whispered. "I cannot bear even to *look* at them, dear. They have cost you—too much!"

"Not the pearls!" Drennan Scott's head drooped forward on his breast and he looked away from the girl's anxious face drearily enough. "No, dear, I cannot explain *why* I know it. But for God's dear sake, and if you love me, darling, block as best you can, the search for the man who fired the shot!"

The girl wrung her hands hopelessly. "I hate the pearls, Drennan!" she sobbed helplessly. She who had kept up so bravely before, was breaking down utterly now. "I do not want them, dear. How can I bear to think of them when you are—"

"I tell you, Eleanor!"—his voice strengthened momentarily—"it was *not* the pearls. Remember *that*. Let them—those others who think they know—believe what they will. It only makes his chances of escape the greater. No shadow of harm can reach *you*, dear, through having them in your possession. Do you understand? *It was not the pearls!*"

For a long month after that shot was fired on the Deephurst Road, he lingered between life and death, with all of the chances most decidedly in favor of the latter. There was one horrible day, indeed—set apart for all time to come in Eleanor Harmon's eyes and mind—when the doctors gave her no hope and her lover's rudderless bark sought lasting anchor in the harbor of past and unforgotten things. Holding her breath as she bent above his almost pulseless body, the girl fought in an agony of terror and with all her failing, faithless soul for the life of the man she loved.

For two weeks even, after that, his hold on life was but little stronger. With Rani Sing, devoted, inscrutable and mysterious, the girl still watched agonizedly, feeling every day, poor child! that on the morrow the supreme sacrifice of all would be demanded of her and that she would be left worse than widowed.

During those first few days, of course, few echoes reached them from the world without the walls of the sick room. The girl, her engagement formally announced, had claimed the right to care personally for her lover, and with her aunt as chaperon, Harmon's Rest had been turned temporarily into a hospital. There had been a search, of course, for the criminal who had been guilty of the unwarranted attack upon Drennan Scott, but that search, energetic enough at first, became soon little better than perfunctory. Eleanor Harmon herself was without male relatives to prosecute an investigation to which she, chiefly interested, lent so little encouragement, and public interest perforce languished. Ailsie Scott was traveling in Egypt, her exact whereabouts unknown; Simon Scott, a distant cousin and the only other living member of the family, when last heard of, had been energetically following a will-of-the-wisp—as first mate on the *Snow Queen*, a ship enlisted in an ill-starred search for the South Pole.

Young Deepford, haggard and sunk-en-eyed, came down to Deephurst about the middle of the second week, when Drennan Scott's life was most de-

CHAPTER IV

AILSIE SCOTT

The engagement, thanks to Drennan Scott's ardor, was a very brief one.

spaired of. If any unjust suspicion that the less-fortunate rival had been in any way concerned in the tragedy lingered in Eleanor Harmon's mind, Allen Deepford's appearance and actions served to dissipate it at once and forever. He asked for and obtained a few minutes' interview with the young girl herself.

"The attack upon Drennan, much as I regret it, of course, is in my opinion but the natural and logical outcome of existing conditions, Miss Harmon," he said directly. "The announcement of your engagement convinces me that you have been either too infatuated to ask your suitor the questions which I begged you to ask, or else that you have been so blinded by love that you have chosen to accept unconditionally and without reserve, whatever fairy tale he has chosen to regale you with. You think that I speak bitterly? Believe me, I am trying my best to restrain myself."

Eleanor Harmon had risen to her feet. "My *fiancé* is lying at the point of death—may be dying even now for aught I know," she said passionately. "Surely that should be enough to keep you from saying such things. If that is all you have to tell me—"

"It is not all—far from it!" Deepford's face, worn and haggard, pleaded for him as no mere words of his could possibly have done. "The papers have had much to say, naturally, of the Rajah's pearls in connection with the attack upon the man who held the stones by rightful possession and as a gift from a royal friend long dead. May I ask if you are foolish enough to keep the gems here at Harmon's Rest?"

"Most certainly not!" The answer was quick and unguarded. "The day after Mr. Scott was shot, the pearls were taken back to town and put in a safety deposit vault. I have not seen them since."

Deepford's face cleared magically. "I supposed you would do that, of course," he said, looking at her yearningly. He told himself again with her dear face before him—told himself wistfully—that Drennan Scott could never possibly care for her—would never love her as he. "I am told that the pursuit

of the man who is guilty of the assault upon Scott has been practically abandoned," he said then, deliberately. "I cannot believe it. May I ask just what foundation there is for such a rumor?"

Eleanor Harmon's face clouded. Her eyes still met his, but they were shadowed now and lacked the old frankness that he had always thought was her greatest charm. "Drennan has been too ill for those nearest him to harbor any thoughts either of justice or revenge," she said however, calmly. "His only sister is in Egypt—"

"So much I know—as I also know that there is an irrevocable breach between them, caused by Drennan's own conduct," said Deepford briefly. "I know just how ungenerous my words must sound to you, Miss Harmon—just how ungenerous my conduct must seem—with Scott desperately ill and unable to defend himself. But I cannot stand idly by and suffer you to allow your name to become irrevocably connected with that of a common criminal and thief! That you are fatally compromising—"

She had risen and now faced Deepford with blazing eyes. "Stop, Mr. Deepford," she interrupted. "Twice I have listened to you patiently when I had no right to do so and when your words were an insult. I will never admit you to my presence again. Common decency should have kept your lips closed—under existing conditions. Yet you have spoken—"

"You need not trouble yourself—I will never attempt to speak to you again," said Deepford with the calmness of despair. "The subject is dismissed between us from this time forward." Something besides resentment and compassion stirred in his lowered voice. "I will not stoop to plead my own love for you as an excuse for my language, Miss Harmon—you are right. You have robbed me of the right to urge such a plea. From henceforth it will be action with me and not words. I warn you now, however, that I mean to save you if possible—in spite of yourself!"

That conversation had occurred toward the end of the second week of

Scott's illness. Perhaps Deepford's wild words had helped the girl more than they had hindered her. Perhaps they had served to brace her like a bitter tonic.

Roses and eucalyptus—which will you
choose to-day,
The eucalyptus of healing, the crimson
roses of May.
The one bears the gift of fragrance,
sweet as the summer's heart,
The other the bitter tonic—choose ye
the better part.

It was all eucalyptus and no roses for Eleanor Harmon, however—chosen or unchosen. Yet, after the end of that week, slowly but surely strength and health came back to the desperately wounded man. He would be long in fully recovering—he realized this and almost his first conscious words were a plea that he and Eleanor might be married at once, so that they might spend the winter together in southern France.

"You need the change quite as much as I do, Eleanor," he said one day, looking pitifully at the girl's fragile, colorless cheeks and the circles under her tired eyes. "You have spent your strength in caring for me, my darling."

"I am so anxious all the time—so *horribly* anxious," she said under her breath, and then broke down utterly. "If it had been only the pearls, you know—but as it is, locked away in my heart always, is the corroding dread, the maddening suspicion— Tell me, Drennan, is this silence between us to last always? Is the shadow never to be lifted, but is it to linger forever—darkening even our wedding day?"

Drennan Scott hesitated. "It will not be a very pleasant thing to tell my wife, Eleanor—the story that I have found it so impossible to tell the woman whom I love," he said very gently. "But you speak wisely, dear, I believe. When we are married there shall be no concealment between us—you and I. I will tell you all, I promise you that."

The weariness and concern in his thin, haggard face terrified the girl—he was very weak and there had been more than one repetition of the first hemorrhage—repetitions that always left him spent and helpless. "There was

a letter from your sister yesterday, Drennan," she said, eager to change the current of his thoughts.

"From Ailsie?" Drennan Scott looked up at her with a flash of interest in his sunken eyes.

"From Ailsie—yes. I am always forgetting that other half-sister Marjory, Drennan, who is so very far away that you never even count her as being among your kith and kin. You told me once that you had never seen her since she was a tiny baby."

"What did Ailsie say?"

"She had only just heard of your illness, dear heart. She was very remorseful and repentant—very anxious and solicitous—and she was taking the first steamer home. She thinks that you are still at Deephurst."

"Coming home?" Scott's brows were knit in a troubled frown. "I am sorry for that, Eleanor—very sorry."

The girl looked up at him tenderly. "Are you afraid that we will not be friends, Drennan—Ailsie and I?" she asked hesitatingly.

"Friends? Oh, I am not afraid of that in the least, sweetheart. Ailsie is a worshipful little soul and her affections know no limitations. She will simply and frankly adore you. But her coming can only mean a repetition of the old divisions—the old dissensions. I can no more make a *confidante* of my sister *now*, than I could two years ago. And Ailsie shares to the full the feminine, illogical dislike of anything that she cannot understand. To her, a thing that is not entirely open and above board—"

"I am afraid that I am feminine and illogical too," the girl said tremulously. "Are you vexed with *me*?"

Drennan laughed shortly, but closed his eyes with a weariness that, real or feigned, effectually put an end to the conversation. And the next day—a full week earlier than they had any right to expect her—Ailsie Scott reached Deephurst.

She came in like an April whirlwind—small and dark and tempestuous—her skirts fluttering about her ankles in breezy abandon—her blue eyes drenched with April tears. "My dear—my dear—I have *you* to thank, worth-

less sinner and gypsy that I am, for Drennan's precious life!" she cried to Eleanor. "Oh, later on—I have heard the most meager accounts so far, you know—you must tell me all about the horrible affair and how it happened. Can I see my brother now?"

"He had rather a bad night last night, and he is resting now," said Eleanor uncertainly. "He had rather a worse night than usual, so the nurse told me—he is convalescing very slowly at the best. I coaxed him—"

"By all means let him rest then," said Ailsie. "I assure you, my dear, that I have not had a decent night's rest since I heard about Drennan. I felt sure when the lawyer's message came that it was only his prosy, old-fogy manner of breaking the news and that my brother was really dead. I went off my head at once and had violent hysterics for over twenty-four hours. I should have been worse than useless had I been here, I know. I assure you, it fairly maddened me to think of my poor brother here with only strangers—Oh, of course, dear—you need not look at me so reproachfully. You must remember that I knew nothing at all about you—until later."

"Your brother has had the very best attention," said Eleanor with old-fashioned gravity. "We had two doctors down from town in the beginning, and one of them—the better one—didn't leave Harmon's Rest for over two weeks. And we had an excellent nurse—the best procurable, I think. Drennan will owe much to her skill and unflagging attention. He has been a model patient. If he had not been—my aunt, who has had a great deal of experience, thinks—"

Ailsie Scott had an odd little habit of interrupting the person who happened to be talking to her, at will. She did so now, with a suddenness that, metaphorically speaking, fairly flung poor, dazed Eleanor off her feet. "Had my brother, I wonder, told you that he and I had quarreled—that we had not been quite good friends for a long, long time?" she asked bluntly. "Really, Miss Harmon, Drennan is too utterly unreasonable! I am sure that you will agree with me—I have quite counted

upon you, you see—that his present manner of living—"

"I wonder if you will pardon me, for interrupting you?" said Eleanor stiffly. "Really, Miss Scott, I must decline to discuss your brother's private affairs—even with you. I am afraid that this will seem very odd to you—"

"It does!" said Ailsie. She flung her childish little head back in a displeased fashion that made Eleanor quake inwardly—she did not care to be an enemy of her future sister-in-law. Her wide-open blue eyes darkened to violet. "I hope that it has not occurred to you, Miss Harmon, that I am in the habit of discussing poor Drennan's affairs—or mine either, for the matter of that—with strangers generally. I only thought—"

She was genuinely hurt—so much, the older girl saw at a glance. "And I am quite as sure that we—you and I—are not going to begin our acquaintance by deliberately misunderstanding each other," she said frankly, thrusting the suddenly-erected barrier ruthlessly aside. "I beg your pardon, dear. I am afraid that I said the very last thing that I should have said. I only meant—"

"And I beg yours—with much more reason," said Ailsie impulsively. "It is I who am to blame—naturally—I nearly always am. I am sure that you can be trusted to act, yourself, with regard to Drennan, and to influence him always to act, only for his own best interests. I am only an impulsive little fool, Eleanor. And I do not improve with age. I am afraid that I shall never be very wise or very clever."

"There's your brother's bell. That means he is awake and is very anxious to see you," said Eleanor pacifically, anxious to divert the conversation to safer topics, and extremely glad of the interruption. "We had your wire an hour ago, you know, saying that you would be here to-day. Shall we go upstairs together—or would you rather see your brother first alone?"

"We will go together—in order to show my brother what good friends we mean to be—you and I," said the girl hurriedly. She swept a startled glance at a slender figure that crossed the up-

per hall a dozen paces away—a slender, swarthy figure, muscular and lithe and stealthy as a thieving cat. He looked curiously over his shoulder at the two girls and then vanished without hurry or over-haste. “That is Rani Sing,” said Eleanor in a low voice. “I supposed of course that you knew him, since, as I have understood, he has been a member of your brother’s household for a long time. I should have added him, I dare say, to the number of people to whom Drennan owes much of his recovery. His unselfish care and devotion—”

A little gasp behind her made her turn sharply. “What on earth can you mean?” asked Ailsie Scott in a kind of stupefaction. “Are you mad—as mad as poor Drennan—or am I? Has the man bewitched *you* with his East Indian magic, I wonder, as he has the others? Is that really Rani Sing, my brother’s would-be murderer—under *this* roof?”

CHAPTER V

THE SHADOW

It was characteristic of Eleanor Harmon that, stunned at first by Ailsie Scott’s accusation, she soon rallied and frankly demanded the girl’s meaning. “Rani Sing is devotion itself to Drennan’s interests,” she said, before she remembered what her lover had told her about his sister’s objections to the East Indian. “I feel sure that he would be the very last person on earth to do anything to harm his master.”

“He was slavishly devoted to my brother in the beginning, I know,” admitted the girl reluctantly. “I never stooped to argue with Drennan about the questionable connection between the two—argument would have been useless since he knew just how I felt about it.”

“Then why should you say—” began the puzzled Eleanor.

“My dear, it may be that I too have my secrets—possibly. At any rate I do not feel inclined to answer that question just now, although I may do so later. But I do not mind telling you that Rani Sing, I am sure, has a deep-seated grudge against my brother—one

of which my brother has never dreamed. And now, I am persuaded, he has taken this horrible method of gratifying it.”

The conversation was terminated at this juncture by Drennan’s voice. “Come in, Ailsie,” he said weakly, but with a note of affectionate welcome that stirred the other woman’s heart. “It is good to see you again, little girl. No, don’t begin to scold—there’s a dear little soul.”

Ailsie’s entreaties were added to her brother’s to further the plans and preparations for an early marriage. After all, the bride-to-be had few legitimate objections to urge to an immediate union. Neither she nor Drennan had any protesting relatives; and in this peculiar case, there was lacking the poverty-barrier that flings its postponing shadow over so many early unions. So the wedding day was eventually set for the first day of October.

The fifteenth of September, the invalid was allowed to sit up for a short time and something in the nature of a fête celebrated the occasion. The weather was still warm—it was Indian summer and balmy as belated spring. A few flowers still bloomed in the Harmon Rest gardens. Scott, after he was allowed to dress, looked far worse than ever—as is the manner of invalids—and his sister Ailsie voiced her disappointment audibly. She had fluttered about him breathlessly since noon and had wearied him with her solicitude.

“Perhaps he has worn himself out,” said Eleanor doubtfully. She looked disappointed, for she too had felt that the invalid would look more like her real lover—and less like the haggard wreck whom she had nursed and borne with so long. “We will go away and leave him for a little while, Ailsie. Perhaps he will fall asleep.”

Protesting vainly, Drennan watched the two as, leaving his door open that he might call them if he needed anything, the two went laughing away. The nurse had gone for a walk, and Rani Sing was attending to some matter at Deephurst. The two girls were talking earnestly together as they passed down the hall to the music room. Drennan

Scott, however, had eyes only for Eleanor. She was rarely beautiful at all times, but this morning, excitement and a momentary relief from anxiety had brought a faint tinge of the old clover-pink to her soft cheeks, and her eyes were bright and animated. She wore a long, trailing, smoke-colored frock, and in her hair a comb set with brilliants. There were some touches of old lace at her throat and wrists; and Ailsie had thrust a spray of "Indian smoke," a plume of faint purple, cloud-like blossoms, in her corsage, and the flowers faded imperceptibly into the hue of her gown. She looked like a queen, Drennan Scott told himself contentedly, and as he closed his eyes, he assured himself that his approaching marriage should make him the most fortunate man in all the world.

He had felt no fatigue—nor was he conscious of any desire for slumber. So, his eyes kept closed only for a moment, he opened them lazily to look through the wide-open window and down the Deephurst Road to Deephurst itself—its roof and towers outlined bravely against the clear evening sky beyond the river. With the thought of Deephurst—a thought that he had thrust deliberately away during his illness—a thousand anxieties came thronging back into Drennan Scott's weakened mind, and he tormented himself uselessly with the old problems that had from the beginning of his engagement, and when he was rational, consumed so much of his waking hours and so effectually murdered rest and sleep. Now, what was he to do with Eleanor and the Deephurst mystery—when Eleanor was his wife and Deephurst her home?"

From a far-away room, the music sounded faintly. Eleanor was playing softly and singing a quaint little folksong that was indissolubly connected in Drennan Scott's mind with the past days of his suffering and his delirium. He listened to it idly enough now—his mind cumbered with other things.

The big chair in which he half-reclined and half-sat, propped in place by numberless pillows, was very near the wide-open window. Almost directly in front of him and only a very little to his

right, was an old-fashioned cheval-mirror. Looking into the clouded surface idly, Drennan Scott suddenly saw something that made him catch his breath.

A part of the room almost directly behind him was visible in the old mirror—a part of the room, the door standing open, and a segment of the hall beyond. And in this hall, a little darkened now that the light of day was failing, something like a shadow faintly stirred.

Scott's mental strength had failed to an extent with his physical health. Otherwise he would at once have called out—and his cry would instantly have been answered and help summoned from the music room, which was easily within reach of his lifted voice. But his thoughts, since his illness, moved slowly and it was not until the fleeting moment had passed—it was not until to call out at all was to precipitate some deadly danger at once—that the thought came at all—and came too late!

The old mirror was a full-length one, but Scott was so seated that only a portion of its blurred surface revealed to him the lurking, stealthy Shadow in the hall outside. He felt keenly that there was a menace in the stooping figure—the figure that was still little better than a shadow—a deadly menace and danger to himself if not to others. He stared at it, helpless to defend himself even if harm was meant—helpless alike to fight as a brave man should, or to run away as a coward must.

For a long time conditions remained unchanged. The Shadow had vanished and did not re-appear, although the young man knew by a sort of intuition that it only kept its place watching—waiting balefully. The song ended in the music room. Eleanor asked a question of the other girl, but Drennan missed the answer and he heard Ailsie laugh delightedly at some clever comment of her own. Were their voices only to be lifted a little, Drennan could easily have heard their every word. But had he lifted his—

The hall grew momentarily darker, although the surface of the clouded mirror was still in the light where the

sunset glow from the window fell full across it. Once more some one spoke in the music room. This time it was Eleanor again and her voice was slightly lifted. "Drennan has fallen asleep," she remarked. "Shall we rouse him?" Before Ailsie answered—even when she did answer—Drennan failed to catch the rest of the words. He was aware that the Shadow in the hall waited too, in a suspense that hung, as perhaps Drennan's own life did, on Ailsie's whim. The young man knew, although he could not catch Ailsie's answer, he knew from the Shadow's attitude, that that answer had been favorable to the Shadow's own plans. He knew it with a little thrill of panic-stricken fear that bespoke no actual cowardice on his part. The Shadow would have all the time that the Shadow wanted—to do what was to be done.

The next moment, still watching the clouded mirror, Drennan saw the Shadow advance again until it stood almost within the half-open door of his own room. Its head was held in a listening attitude, slightly bent. The young man could not be quite sure just what the attitude meant, but he felt that the Shadow was undecided just what step to take next. The clouded mirror, the angle at which it was tilted, the young man's own distance from it, and an ugly place where the coating of quicksilver was worn thin on its surface—all these were enough to curtail slightly his vision. There was only a portion of a figure to be seen—a scrap of fluttering garment, a twitching hand—a hand held advanced a little either to defend or to attack. That was all.

The garment itself was dark and indefinite. Its wearer might be either a man or a woman. The single hand told much more—all in fact that a hand could tell. It was slender and brown, and Drennan was able to read greed in its every half-involuntary movement—greed and lust for blood. There was something infinitely horrible about it—more horrible than there would have been had the face itself not been hidden.

For a moment sick and faint, the young man closed his eyes from sheer

weakness. When he opened them again, the shadow had vanished and the figure itself was gone. It had passed beyond his range of vision and the clouded mirror—possibly into the room behind him. Drennan Scott was no coward. He had fought more than once, for he had been a soldier among other things, and he had done his duty, he hoped, as well as the next man. It was on a page of his life's history—a part of the story which Rani Sing might have related but which he would never tell—that there was one time when the young man had stood in a wide room—a room which was like a shambles and reeked with the smell of hot blood—with a dancing girl clinging helplessly to him—and, with his sword in his good right hand had sheared off men's limbs as a child would maltreat a paper doll. There had been one Hindoo—a giant, hideous, grinning gargoyle of a figure who had come at him frenziedly. Scott had heard the girl scream once—horribly—and after that a Berserker rage had come upon him and he had struck—and struck—and *struck!* The hideous gargoyle had shuddered—there had been a headless form from which the blood had spouted plop—plop—plop—like water from a mud-choked hydrant. And the head—Drennan Scott had seen the man more than once in his delirium, a high-caste Hindoo whom the pariah dogs had shared impartially along with the Rajah, amicably enough. They were blood-gutted, good-humored brutes—those pariah dogs—following the mutiny and the down-fall of Jawnpore.

Now, even remembering all this—as Drennan had a nasty, uncomfortable way of doing often—it occurred to the young man that it had after all required far less courage to stand with the Rajah's double trust—a rope of matched and priceless pearls and a slatternly, terrified dancing girl much the worse for flesh and fright—in his keeping and face a mob of maddened, terrified, native fanatics single-handed and alone, than it did to close his eyes now in the growing darkness and wait for the Shadow behind him—and what the Shadow meant to do. There was absolutely nothing to give Drennan the slightest clue as to what to expect in

the matter, nothing to help him to determine whether the final issue was to be robbery or revenge. He could not deny that there were grave reasons for suspecting that it might be either. In the meantime, absolute silence reigned in the room. Even the music from the other apartment where the two women who loved him waited, had ceased entirely. There was nothing to prove to him that he had not fallen asleep and dreamed the whole thing—nothing but the dull surface of the clouded mirror which had a convincing air about it—nothing but that and an odd odor that began to be perceptible in the room—the odor of mint growing thickly on the banks of a thread of a stream where the water gurgled—

He roused himself again but it took an effort, for he was very weak. If the thief dared use chloroform, it could only mean the ending of all things for him, according to the doctor's verdict, rendered a few days before when the matter of probing for the pistol-ball had been thoroughly canvassed for the hundredth time. "No anæsthetics for you, young man," the doctor had said then cheerfully. "You've got an ugly heart-action that wont bear tampering with just now. I tell you frankly that a little chloroform, and you would be out like *that*—" He had puffed out his cheeks like a toy balloon and expelled his breath sharply. "The pistol-ball is not troubling you, is it? Then my advice is, that you had—" Drennan was drifting fast down the green-fringed current where the thread of a stream rippled thinly and the wild mint grew thick and rank—

"Drennan!"

Drennan tried to close his eyes but found the operation difficult—they persisted in staring outward at the dark, as the dead Hindoo had stared. And after that, curiously enough, things altered and he found his eyes shut and found it impossible to open them again no matter how hard he tried to do so. It had never occurred to him, he found himself thinking with a dim sort of self-pity—even the great surgeon who had been called in first had never hinted—that one of the possible consequences succeeding the illness that followed his

wound, might be blindness. Drennan laughed again at the ridiculous idea of walking up and down some day and waking to the queer fact that queenly, proud Eleanor Harmon had burdened herself for life with a blind man for a husband. Would she lead him by a string, he wondered, like a filthy, mangy, sightless cur? Drennan began to sigh over the thought, and from sighing began to whimper, and from whimpering—

"Drennan!"

"Good Heavens, will that doctor *never* come! More cold water, Eleanor, that is all that we can do. There, there's no need to drown him. What on earth can have happened to him. Is it his heart—again?"

"Nonsense!" The nurse had come at last. Although Drennan could not open his eyes, he was keenly conscious that intelligent help was at hand. The nurse would be sorry for him—she would not allow even Eleanor to lead him about by a string. He whimpered childishly again.

"There—he is worse than ever," said another voice. It was a man this time, for the sake of variety. Maybe Eleanor had become offended and was gone away. "I am sure that he is dying now; I can feel no pulse."

"Nonsense—on the contrary, he is coming round all right," said the nurse's vigorous, sensible voice. She was a practical woman and believed in wasting no time in heroics. "The doctors were wrong about Mr. Scott's heart all the time. I thought so. I told them in the beginning—"

"You told them what?"

"A little further to the right, Miss Harmon, please—you are cutting off the air from that window. And he will recover more quickly if he gets plenty of fresh air. Thank you. Some one has chloroformed him. How long was he left alone in the room?"

Through a dim haze that confused hearing as well as sight, Drennan heard Eleanor's voice and caught a failing glimpse of her pale, scared face. "It couldn't possibly have been more than fifteen minutes," she said uncertainly, looking for confirmation to the younger girl.

"It was not nearly so long, I should say," remarked Ailsie, whose mercurial spirits were rising fast.

"It's those wretched pearls again!" said Miss Harmon miserably. She looked dubiously across at the chest of drawers in utter confusion—the rifled desk, the lid of which had been wrenched off roughly. There was disorder everywhere.

"Have you given the alarm?"

"Yes, I did that at once and I had Rani—who entered the lower hall just as we discovered poor Drennan's condition—wire to town for detectives."

"Eleanor, have you forgotten, dear, that you promised me—"

"Drennan, poor Eleanor told me all about that wretched promise. I assure you that her life is in danger as long as a thief so resolute as this one is, remains at large. Surely you must see that and surely you are not going to allow *her* to be endangered?"

"Jones saw the fellow this time," said Mrs. Harmon, the aunt, meditatively. In spite of the panic of the others, she had not allowed herself to lose her head.

"He saw the thief—are you sure?"

"My dear Drennan, you must compose yourself. You must remember that your mind is still befogged and bewildered. The chloroform has robbed you of the capacity of judging for yourself. Yes, Jones saw the would-be thief. Thank Heaven, he gained nothing by his attempt at robbery, for Eleanor's jewels were sent up to town with the pearls. I had been uneasy about them for a long time and so was only too glad to see them go. Eleanor's dear mother left her a very handsome diamond *parure*—"

"What kind of a looking chap was he—the thief?" asked Drennan bewilderedly—stumblingly. His groping fingers found their way to Eleanor's cold little hand and lingered there.

"He was young, so Jones said, and slender. 'Young-looking,' are the man's exact words. He rushed past Jones, nearly knocking him over, and Jones said that he knew the fellow for a criminal at once by—"

"You are right for once, Ailsie," said Drennan feverishly. "They are

never going to abandon their attempt now, to secure the pearls, until they are successful or the gems are put forever beyond their reach—and they know it. The appearance of the thief at Harmon's Rest terrifies me, for it convinces me that the energies of the criminal or criminals will be directed against this place now rather than against Deephurst."

"The detectives will be down in the morning," said Eleanor Harmon lifelessly. "You had better try to rest, Drennan. You had better go to bed anyway, even if you can't sleep."

But her lover was watching her obstinately. "I am not ready to go to bed yet," he said stubbornly. He was weak enough to be childish and contentious. "You are hiding something from me, Eleanor—you or Ailsie—and Ailsie never had a real secret from anyone in all her life. Come now, what is it?"

"I am not hiding anything from you," repudiated Ailsie indignantly. "And neither, so far as I know, is Eleanor. Really, I wonder at you, Drennan—I do, indeed. The thief must have stolen your good manners as well as your wit. You most certainly have lost them both."

"Good night, dear," Eleanor whispered brokenly. "You would not be angry with me—if you knew. I am almost insane with anxiety, Drennan—that is all. If I act oddly, that is the reason for it. There is no other."

She stooped, touched her lips to her lover's parched, feverish cheek and slipped from the room. But once outside in the hall and safely away from the others, she drew a scrap of silk from her pocket and stared at it with eyes that were suddenly grown dry and cold—as cold as the brilliants in her jeweled comb. "I drew this from a sliver of the lid of the desk where the thief had wrenched it off," she mused. "What does it, what *can* it mean?"

She smoothed the scrap in her palm as she spoke. Faint with the odor of costly essence, and fine as the web of a spider, faintly-tinted as the hue of a butterfly's wing, and thin as the thinnest texture that loom ever wove, it rested there—the scrap from a woman's silken tissue veil?

CHAPTER VI

AT DEEPHURST

The detectives came and lingered. Barred from Deephurst by Rani Sing's inscrutable politeness but uncompromising obstinacy, they argued the matter over with Drennan Scott at Harmon's Rest and with Eleanor Harmon as Scott's representative, volubly and with more or less acrimony. On the day that the last one, Henry Manners, quitted Harmon's Rest in disgust, he—Manners—outlined the entire situation with more truth than courtesy.

"It's this way, Miss Harmon," he said frankly. "There was an attempt made to steal the pearls—beyond the shadow of a doubt. 'Slimsy' was in it, the cleverest thief on either continent, bar none. And he had two confederates—his wife, with whom the police have nothing to do, since they have never been able to get a line on her, and a cousin of her's—Tracy Carter. At least that is the name that the cousin goes by on this side of the water. Carter had a pal who caught on to the fact that the pearls were being sent out of town. Carter himself had had his eyes on the stones for a long time—nearly a year—just as he had had the same eyes on Mrs. Saxon's diamond *parure* (Saxon is that new Western Senator, you will remember, who married the actress), on Miss Villier's rubies, and on the emerald coronet that that royal idiot (I beg your pardon, Miss Harmon) gave to the young woman who made such a fool of him last summer. And it's pretty clear to my mind, that Slimsy and Carter—they left the woman in town for obvious reasons—followed the pearls down here to Deephurst. Well, after that, what happens?"

Eleanor Harmon watched the detective, fascinated, as he put the tips of his fingers together with mathematical exactness, pursed his lips and nodded at her. "Well!" she managed to say after a little, impatiently. "What about it afterwards? They didn't get the pearls."

"You are right about that, young lady—*perfectly* right!" The great detective chuckled gleefully over the

young woman's cleverness. "As you so significantly remark, they did not get the pearls. And why?"

But this time she refused to rise to the bait. "Why didn't they get them?" she murmured idiotically and then flushed scarlet as he looked at her reproachfully.

"Why didn't they get the stones? Because, my dear young lady, they were not there to get. In the first place, some one before them had made the same attempt and had been equally unsuccessful. The whole thing, so far as the Carter gang was concerned, ended in a stupid fiasco. And all the time the pearls were safe under lock and key in town. That is why."

"Then you do not believe that Carter himself came down here?"

"My dear young lady, Carter is no fool. But you must remember that the very cleverest of us make mistakes sometimes. He watched this house like a hawk while Mr. Scott was so desperately ill as to require the constant attention of a nurse, but he was clever enough to realize that there was small use in making any attempt to secure the gems then. In the guise of a man in search of local color for a book he was writing, Carter loafed about and fretted his heart out waiting for the watch on the sick man to be relaxed. Instinct—the instinct of the born thief, that comes in time to be a sort of sixth sense—had taught him that if the pearls were at Harmon's Rest at all, they were in the room least possible of access—the sick man's own apartment."

"Then, after all, it was this man, Carter, who was guilty of the assault upon poor Drennan?" asked the young girl thoughtfully. "Do you know—"

"Miss Harmon, what should you say, I wonder, if I were to tell you *all* I know?" said Manners whimsically. "For instance, that it was *not* Carter after all, who made that idiotic attempt to put Scott down and out by means of chloroform?"

"*Not* Carter?" repeated the girl bewilderedly. "Then *what* does all this long conversation lead up to, Mr. Manners, if not to Tracy Carter and to Tracy Carter's associates?"

Manners looked at her oddly. "It's a queer lay, Miss Harmon," he said, eyeing her significantly. "The very queerest, if you will allow me to say so, that has come my way in a long, long time. That is the reason I regret so much the fact that you and Mr. Scott—especially Mr. Scott—have not been quite frank with me. As a result of your reserve and evasion, I have been left to peg away much of the time in inaction."

"Mr. Scott has doubtless been as frank with you as he possibly could," she said with a touch of hauteur, but she flushed guiltily.

"I dare say—very possibly so!" It was no part of the detective's policy to offend the young lady who now looked at him so wistfully. "What I was going on to say, young lady, was simply this: you see, Tracy Carter found his errand forestalled when he really came to take action in the matter of the pearls. The man who entered the house the other evening—who chloroformed Mr. Scott—was *not* Tracy Carter, but some one else."

"Who?"

The detective sighed. "I wish I knew," he said gently. "I wish there was some way of finding out. I'll tell you one thing, though, Miss Harmon—a thing that I would much rather say to Mr. Scott if he was only strong enough to hear it. And that is this: you are in grave danger and Mr. Scott is in grave danger until this man—not a member of Tracy Carter's gang—is caught and put behind prison bars. I have deliberately left the impression, and have tried to lead the public to believe, that it *was* Carter who made the attempt to steal the pearls the other night, but I only did it for your own protection. I warn you now that you had better be on your guard."

He went away after that, and much as Eleanor would have liked to believe that it was wounded professional pride and offended sensibility that had prompted his words, she knew better. It was vain—and worse than vain—for her to try to deceive herself. It was also in vain that she tried to persuade herself that the publicity that had been given to the matter of the pearls was

enough to insure her own safety. She knew better than that, too.

The days dragged by. Drennan Scott made what would be called an uneventful recovery, but he displayed a strange reluctance with regard to returning to Deephurst. Rani Sing stayed there and the old lot of capable servants on whom Scott could depend. There were no new ones and Eleanor knew from the Hindoo's regularly-given reports that the doors to the mysterious suite of rooms were still barred and bolted fast. No one ventured to break the unwritten law that held curiosity captive.

No suspicious characters lurked about either Harmon's Rest or Deephurst. A plain-clothes man from town took a position as under-groom at Harmon's Rest and his familiarity with the under-world was enough to insure—so both Eleanor and her lover believed—freedom from annoyance. It was one of the latter's whims that his betrothed should wear the Rajah's pearls at her wedding; and under a safe convoy, on the night of the thirtieth of September they were brought for the second time down from town.

There were personal reasons why the marriage should be semi-private. It was not entirely so, however—a small number of friends of both parties witnessed the ceremony. The rites were conducted by a certain Bishop Harmon, a distant cousin of the bride, in the little Episcopal chapel which Eleanor's father had built to commemorate the death of his wife. Directly after the ceremony, the bridal party proceeded to Deephurst, from whence they were to set forth on their bridal trip. This trip was to cover all of the show-places of the two continents and was to last for several months. Drennan Scott's wealth made the question of the young people's future a very easy one to settle.

There was a certain amount of embarrassment about the ceremony. The bride herself was nervous and ill at ease—the bridegroom still excessively pale and scarcely recovered from his long illness. He looked at the woman who was soon to bear his name with adoration scarcely concealed, yet with

a certain amount of nervousness as well.

Eleanor Harmon wore the traditional white satin and lace with orange blossoms, while about her slender, rounded throat gleamed the matchless pearls that had once before—long before they came into the possession of the Indian Rajah—been a queen's royal dower. The story of the pearls was well known in Deephurst by this time, and more than one curious glance swept from the bride's beautiful, matchless face, to the gift that had already caused so much bloodshed, anxiety and heart-break.

The day itself was a most wretched one. An almost unprecedented season of beautiful days—days whose fair Indian summer radiance rivaled the best that spring or summer could boast—had culminated in a severe thunderstorm, followed by a downpour of rain that was no better than a deluge. For hours before the ceremony, workmen about the church were kept busy erecting awnings and shelters in order that the program of the young people—simple as it was—might be carried out. And even then, scarcely an hour before that set for the ceremony, and only a few moments after the carriages containing the bridal party had crossed the river, the flood swept away the bridge across it and rendered a return of the young people to Harmon's Rest—had such a return been contemplated—an utter impossibility.

In a carriage close behind that which carried the bridal party, two men from the detective agency in town—men selected for their tact and ability, never relaxed their vigilance. Through the thickly-falling rain they kept their eyes on the carriage directly in front and the young people whom they were set to guard.

"My dear child, I sincerely hope that the state of the weather to-day may not indicate—" began the good Bishop ponderously, when as usual Ailsie interrupted him.

"I am sure I begged Eleanor to set the date for the ceremony with some faint reference to the forecasts of the Weather Bureau," she said plaintively. The strain of the situation was telling

upon Ailsie, too. "'My dear,' I said to her, 'such people ought to know their business—even if they do not. Then why not—'"

The carriage plumped down into a mud-puddle and Ailsie shrieked hysterically. A peal of thunder increased the restlessness of the horses and the harness clanked dismally. "I shall most certainly be glad when we are safely out of this!" groaned Drennan, addressing himself to Eleanor, and resentfully unconscious of the others. "The sun will shine again to-morrow, my dear girl. We will forget the rain." And for answer she smiled up into his fond eyes.

Even the Bishop—he was well-fed and liked his comfort—felt that his good spirits were effectually quenched, for the church was cold and damp and draughty, the wedding-guests depressed—even the bridal flowers were drenched and spoiled. Above it all, however, the bride, more than sunshine, fresh air, good cheer and flowers, was her own sweet self. She shone, a star, with a radiance that even the dark day could not dim.

Behind them, while the Bishop did his little best to make the ceremony as impressive as possible, the two men from the detective agency took their places in the back of the church and conversed in low tones. "Have you seen anybody that looked in the least suspicious, Gurley?" asked one of them. Gurley was scribbling in a little notebook. His wife had asked for a description of the bride's toilet.

"No, I guess the job is a snap, this time, old man. Why not? Carter is too wise to try the same stunt again—so soon."

"It's not Carter—and it's not the pearls, maybe," said Gurney, puzzling over the difference between a bias fold and lengthwise gore—pearl garniture and passementerie. "I know that Manners had some queer idea of his own about it."

"Didn't he think that it was the pearls that they were after?"

"Oh, you know Manners," said Gurley irritably. They were trying to find the ring now—the bridegroom's face was a brilliant carmine and Ailsie

Scott, jerking like a paralytic, was wondering prayerfully whether she could restrain a hysterical outbreak until they quitted the church. Sitting alone across the aisle from the two men was an old woman with a shawl drawn tightly about her shoulders. Gurley had noticed her more than once, rather because of her proximity to himself than for any other reason. She displayed a great deal of interest in the proceedings. Her face was dry and brown and puckered like the withered husk of a nut, and she wore thin, black cotton gloves that were drawn tightly over her veinous, trembling hands. Her decent black silk was made after the fashion of a by-gone time. Gurley knew that the man sitting in front of him was an old ex-steward of the Deephurst estate under the former owner. "Who is the aged party on your right?" he asked of the steward, in a whisper which the old woman must have heard, for she turned sharply and fixed a pair of glasses on her hooked nose. She sniffed audibly as Gurley reddened.

"There's plenty of fools left in the world yet," she remarked maliciously to nobody in particular—to the intense enjoyment of Gurley's companion.

"The old lady does seem pretty fractious," said the steward indifferently. "She and the bridegroom are not very good friends, I guess. There's a feud of long standing between the Scotts and the Merritts. Her name is Merritt."

Now the bride and her husband were passing down the aisle. She was smiling up into his face a little tremulously as she passed, and in spite of the storm, the world's great barometer changed from "stormy" to "set fair." Even practical, skeptical Gurley took a tight grip on himself and swallowed a lump in his throat as she passed. "She's a thoroughbred all right," he said to Smithers; and Smithers, who was in a hurry to get outside and comfort himself with tobacco, nodded.

The storm did not lessen in the least. The bridal party, as they drove up the wide, oak-shaded avenue at Deephurst, were inclined to be garrulous and a trifle light-headed. "I didn't happen to see Rani," remarked Ailsie once

as a flash of lightning split the rain-threaded mist before them as a sharp knife would split a snowball. "Didn't he care to see you married, Scott?"

The question was rather an awkward one for some reason. "Rani had matters of more importance to attend to, I dare say," remarked Drennan. He flashed a quick glance at his wife, but she was watching the muddy, rain-swept ground and the writhing branches of the great oaks, and he couldn't be sure that she had heard either question or answer. "You forget, Ailsie, that Rani has a thousand and one things to attend to—that I am leaving home for a year—and that he doesn't travel with me." And Ailsie, biting her lip, fell silent.

Only a scant dozen of the wedding guests—distant cousins of the bride mostly—followed the bridal party to Deephurst to wish the newly-married couple God-speed upon their journey. It was one of these—a brawny Scotchman—who usurped the bridegroom's privilege in view of his invalidism, and lifting the bride in his strong arms, carried her across the doorstep. "Not a thread of your braw finery—not even the sole of your dainty slipper shall be soiled, my bonny lassie," he said. "And I wish ye many happy years to spend with the man whom ye hae chosen."

There was a breakfast—or dinner or luncheon—a nondescript meal which might have been any one or all of the three—at which toasts were drunk standing; and Drennan, flushed and handsome now, with his head erect and his eyes very bright, responded to the many wishes for him and his bride, with a little speech which was considered quite an oratorical and literary gem in its way, and which was highly applauded. Mrs. Harmon grew tearful after this, and Ailsie, who from a flighty, hysterical wreck had developed into a very witch full of all sorts of whims, kept the whole table in a gale of laughter. "It's time to change your gown, dear," she whispered aside to Eleanor at last, under cover of the Scottish cousin's funny little speech.

"The train leaves in an hour."

Eleanor, who had been waiting for the signal, arose nervously. Her new

maid, a wholesome, bright-eyed girl whom Mrs. Harmon had been training, was standing behind her chair. "I'll not be long," said the bride, looking across the table at her husband.

But the Scotch cousin was not ready to have her go. He was not accustomed to champagne, nor to pretty cousins. "Only one last word, my bonny cousin," he said. "One last word and one of the roses at your breast for a love-knot."

The bride was smiling. Her cheeks were hot with color now under the light of the many candles in the old-fashioned candelabra. She cast a single glance at the windows, against which the rain was splashing, and leaned forward a little. "When I come back—" she began in her fresh, young voice.

Perhaps, as her hand sought the roses at her breast she touched a thorn, or perhaps only she touched too hastily the catch of the necklace, which may have been frail and worn. At any rate, as she leaned forward with the sheaf of bride-roses in her hand, the frail chain snapped under the touch and the pearls, like melting ice-drops, rained down in the huge golden punch-bowl before her, spattering her pearl garniture with crimson and dyeing the pearls themselves with a hideous stain that made her shudder.

Ailsie screamed hysterically—a horrible shriek that brought the guests to their feet in a panic. Her brother clapped his palm rudely across her lips. "Ailsie!" he cried sternly.

It was Peggy, the maid, who rallied first—who pulled herself together and fished the dripping pearls from their crimson bath, and snapped them hurriedly within the jewel box which she carried. It was Peggy who led her mistress from the room. "The machine is waiting, Eleanor—don't be long," Drennan said, and the girl smiled and nodded to him. "Do not forget Geneva and the horrible thing that happened to *her*," cried Ailsie. "There's a haunted room at Deephurst, remember—with ghosts and goblins to spare, beside the inevitable skeleton which all of us boast among our family possessions. 'Ware danger, Eleanor!" There was a spice of malice in her tone, and

she also smiled as she watched the flush which covered her brother's brow.

Outside in the hall, Peggy waited for a caution from Gurley, who was also her brother-in-law, while Eleanor had a last word with her aunt, who was to return to Harmon's Rest. "Where are the thieves now, John?" Peggy asked, of herself quite as much as Gurley.

"There's no sign of them yet," said Gurley, with an approving glance at the trim figure and good-humored face. "Have you snapped the catch of that jewel-box you carry, Peggy? Good. Don't let it out of your sight for a moment, my girl."

Peggy nodded as she followed her new mistress up the wide stairs. Eleanor was not over-familiar with Deephurst, although she had visited it more than once in her earlier youth, before Drennan's time. There had been a girl of her own age there then—a daughter of the uncle since dead, and the two had played and dreamed and planned enough within the old-fashioned walls to help her to make her way by a sort of instinct now. She did not need Rani Sing, who crossed the upper hall, lowering his eyes respectfully as he passed, to direct her steps.

And at last, when the merry voices below had been drowned by the distance, they came, as a matter of course, to a wide room with a flame burning upon the hearth—a flame reflected back from golden bottles and brushes and combs on the dressing-table, and jeweled belts and buttons and pins and buckles from another near by. "Drennan has been very prodigal with his wealth," she said to herself, with her cheeks hot. "Foolish boy! Come in, Peggy; we have no time to waste."

The fire on the tiled hearth snapped viciously, then died down. The flame flashed back no more from jeweled comb and pins and belts and buckles—from golden essence bottles and puff-boxes. The rain beat against the windows, and slowly the hour hand crept round the clock. Peggy busied herself, with many a nervous glance at the pot-stomached, ormolu time-piece on the high mantel—the clock upheld by an ugly idol with cross eyes and a shifty

chin. "They will be growing impatient," she remarked once.

Downstairs time dragged more heavily. The Scotch cousin had a deal on for the next morning—there was only one train by which he could reach home—and his presence on the spot was imperatively necessary. He found himself so anxious to get away from Deephurst that his opinion of Eleanor shifted swiftly from "a douce, decent, bonny lassie," to "a feckless, neglect-fu', idle body—I fear me she'll come to no good." Ailsie was growing hysterical again and her brother alternately spoke of twisting people's necks—meaning the chauffeur who reported the passage of time every five minutes—and delivered encomiums on his wife, whom he agreed with the company generally in pronouncing the most beautiful, divinely-adorable woman whom God ever made. Outside in the hall, Gurley snapped his watch and, momentarily endowed with the gift of tongues, gave his opinion of women in the abstract as a man and a husband—opinions which his younger companion accepted, it is to be hoped, with wonder and awe.

And upon this waiting assembly, of a sudden, the little maid Peggy, panic-stricken and demoralized, terrified and fairly mad with sheer fright, burst with wide eyes and up-flung palms. "Something terrible has happened!" she wailed. "Do, for God's sake, come at once! Miss Eleanor has disappeared, and the pearls with her!"

CHAPTER VII

THE END

Ailsie's utter collapse in a fainting fit hindered matters only briefly. When the party from the dining-room reached the suite of rooms which had been assigned to the bride—the distracted, new-made husband in advance—they found it quite empty. The dying fire-light winked back diabolically, like an evil imp from gem and precious stone, from gold and silver and cut-glass scent-bottles. But the bride was gone.

Gurley, tricked and bewildered and

shamed, followed close behind young Scott. "I ought to have *known* that there was something wrong," he said, crestfallen. "Come, my girl, the heroics can just as well be continued in our next. Tell us what you know about this outrage."

"I unhooked Miss Eleanor's frock," whimpered the unhappy maid. "It was I who urged her to hurry—she seemed to be in a sort of happy dream. 'Never mind about that, Peggy,' she said to me more than once in reply to my remonstrances. 'There is plenty of time. It will never be my wedding day again, with Drennan waiting for me downstairs.'"

"I still held the case that contained the pearls when I began to unhook her and she took it from my hand as if she couldn't bear the stones out of her sight. John,"—she nodded toward the detective—"had warned me to be very careful about them and to be continually on my guard, and besides, I remembered of a sudden, that it was supposed that they had been the cause of the attack upon Mr. Scott, and that it was really because of them and their value, that John and Mr. Smithers had been detailed upon the case and both of them sent down from town. I felt a little tightening of my heart-strings when I thought of this, but Miss Eleanor had taken them out of their case again by this time and wine-stained as they were, had clasped them about her throat again over her traveling dress, as if she could not bear to let them go.

"'I am going into the next room for a few minutes, Peggy,' she said to me, and it was then that I noticed that her eyes were wet. 'I am going away now and I want to offer a little prayer for Divine help to guide me in the new life to which I am going. Give me five minutes alone and then call me. You may get my hat and veil and gloves for me while you wait. I will be quite ready then.' She passed into the other room and closed the door between us. I waited until I knew that she was going to be late for the train—" The agitated girl burst out sobbing again.

Gurley, with one ear open for the girl's explanation, had, in the meantime, not been idle. He, too, flung the

inner door wide to find that room also, like the other, quite empty. There was a lace handkerchief on the floor, where the bride had dropped it, and a rose-bud from the sheaf of flowers which she had carried. Its moisture-laden weight had snapped the slender stem from the blossom. And that was all.

"The girl cannot be very far away," said Gurley sharply. "Turn in the alarm—you, Jones—and keep the wires hot until you know that every officer on the force there in town is on the alert. Get downstairs at once, Smithers, and see if there are wheel-marks anywhere about. A young woman who weighs — one hundred and forty pounds? Thank you, Mrs. Harmon, I guessed as much. A young woman of that weight cannot get very far away without assistance on a night like this."

He was examining the room minutely as he spoke. After the one horrible moment, when the discovery had been made that his young wife was missing, Drennan Scott had not spoken. His hands were like ice; his lips were set in a thin, ugly line, and under his gloomy brows his dark eyes were like drift-ice after a freshet. He threw Ailsie roughly aside, when she would have spoken to him.

"Leave me alone, Aislie!" he said shortly. "If you can help in any way—help! If you cannot, for God's sake hold your tongue!"

Smithers, speaking to Gurley, roused Scott to a sense of his surroundings again. "There are no wheel-marks anywhere—save the ones which were made by our carriages—since the rain began," he said succinctly. "The girl is not in the house anywhere, unless,"—he flashed a quick glance across the room—"unless," he repeated uncertainly, "she is within that room known as the 'Forbidden Room,' here at Deep-hurst and which nobody is allowed to enter. She may be in there."

"Enter it at once!" said Gurley peremptorily. "Burst the door down if necessary. I wonder at you, Smithers. It's not like you to act like a baby. Lead the way; we will search that room instantly!"

"Stop!"

Gurley was a very ordinary man in appearance, but with the majesty of the law behind him, he became something more. He was Authority, visible and embodied.

He turned now, a trifle impatiently, to Scott himself. "I don't know what the game is now, sir," he said respectfully. "I don't know what it has been—up to now, it has been none of my business. Only now, you must be able to see for yourself since you are a man of sense, that I am acting strictly within my rights when I demand that every door in this house shall be thrown open until we are through with this search. Surely you can see that I am right, sir. You must see—"

Drennan's face was convulsed with emotion. "You must remember that to pass that guarded door is to treat the sacred promise which I have given and which I have kept inviolate so long, as a thing of no worth," he said hoarsely. "It is to utterly dishonor myself—"

Gurley looked at him steadily. "What if it does?" he asked quietly. "What is your dishonor—compared with your wife's life?"

Drennan Scott groaned. "Man, you do not know what you ask," he said miserably. "Even an ordinary oath, you see, I might break, but this—I tell you, Gurley, nothing on earth could possibly justify me in violating my pledged word—nothing! Besides, I tell you she is not *in* that room—it is utterly impossible for anyone to cross that threshold without Rani's knowledge and connivance. You are unreasonable. Rani guards the door and he is passionately devoted to my interests. It would be worse than useless for any one to *attempt* to enter that room—guarded as it is. Don't I know what I am talking about? If these infernal pearls have cost my Eleanor's life—"

"It was *not* the pearls—alone," said the detective steadily. He was at his wit's end by this time. The case was desperate and he felt thoroughly justified in resorting to desperate measures. "Listen to me, Mr. Scott. If I am able to convince you that you are wrong when you assert that no danger can come to you or to your wife through

Rani, in that fast-locked and bolted room, will you do as I wish? May I take the steps *then*—the steps that I may deem necessary?"

Drennan Scott hesitated. "In that case—" he began weakly.

"Thank you, sir; you will not regret this decision, Mr. Scott—believe me. Now, I want you to listen to what I am about to say. You have spoken of Rani Sing, Mr. Scott, as your confidant, and the guardian of your honor. It was Rani Sing—renegade Hindoo and dirty thief—who followed you that day on the Deephurst Road and who attempted your life."

The blow struck Drennan Scott, already almost stunned by the awful thing that had come to him on his own hearthstone, full in the face. He laughed incredulously—a harsh, croaking laugh that made his sister shrink half-affrightedly away from him. "Rani Sing!" he repeated dully and laughed again. "Do you happen to know what Rani Sing has done for me, Gurley—the man whom you are pleased to call a dirty thief? I owe it to him, that I am alive to-day. I owe it to him"—he thought of the headless Hindoo, and he thought of that other man who had dragged him helpless and all but dying from below that headless thing's twitching body. "Look for my wife—for Eleanor, Gurley," he said wearily. "Find the devil who has stolen her from me and I will give you a deed in fee simple to Deephurst and all that it contains. Let your men—"

"I'll find her for you, Mr. Scott," said Gurley pityingly. "And she has been gone only a little while, you know—even that devil can hardly have harmed her so soon. He will want to cause you to suffer—suffer far more than you have had time to suffer yet. Courage, man! It is Rani Sing, sir, believe me. So much Manners himself told me. What was Rani Sing's motive—aside from greed?"

"He has no motive—I tell you he can have had none!" said Drennan Scott impetuously. "I tell you, you do not know Rani Sing as I know him."

"We are wasting time here, sir," said Smithers impatiently. He spoke in a lower voice than the others had used

and he looked fearfully and uneasily over his shoulder at the open door. "If the chap has a confederate—"

"True!" said Gurley grimly. "I'll trouble you to show us the way to that mysterious, forbidden room of yours, Mr. Scott. In the other wing? Thank you. I'll not trouble you to go with me unless you would rather do so."

"Oh, I'll go with you," said Scott briefly. He looked dazed and ill and terrified. Ailsie choked down a sob and slipped her hand in his.

In solemn silence they followed Gurley down the hall and into the other wing of the great house. The Scotch cousin followed close on Scott's heels. His brow was bent and lowering, his lips drawn back from his teeth like those of an angry dog, and on his face was the look that his ancestors often wore when cattle-thieves from the Border clans came and went through the country-side burning and harrying, leaving flaming byre, and terrified women and children, and plundered homes behind them. "Has anybody seen anything of that infernal Hindoo during the past hour?" asked John Gurley, but no one answered him.

By degrees—no one could tell why—a subtle change, vague and indefinite, yet fearfully strange, fell over the little group. It was not caused by fright alone. Gurley was a good judge of human nature in the abstract, but even he was forced to own himself baffled when he tried to define the changed attitude of the few who followed grimly at his heels. It was a part of the very air that they breathed—the atmosphere that surrounded them. They drew closer together—the half-dozen people led by Gurley himself. The detective stared at Scott in amazement as they reached the end of the hall. "Is the Hindoo here?" he asked in a low whisper.

Drennan Scott hesitated. "He *should* be here," he said simply. "That is, if what you believe is true and he has not taken alarm."

"He has the right to come here at will, does he not—the right to enter this apartment when he pleases?"

The young man flushed. "He has the *right* to do so—undeniably," he said shortly.

Again Gurley hesitated. "He is a very desperate man—the Hindoo is," he said uncertainly. "I dare not give him the time he wants between the moment of the breaking in of the door—and what might follow his knowledge that his perfidy had been discovered and that he would have to reckon with an outraged law. For God's sake, Mr. Scott, if you can control your voice sufficiently to do so, call on him in your usual manner and demand that you be allowed to enter the room. You, too, have been in the habit of visiting these apartments—have you not?"

"I have only visited them at rare intervals," said Drennan. His face was still wet with perspiration, although the evening was chill with the driving rain and wind. "It has been six months since I visited this room last—more than that. And before that—"

"Can you control your voice sufficiently to deceive a man who is utterly unscrupulous and who is as shrewd as the very devil himself? Remember that *her* life may depend upon it, sir."

"He may not be in that room," said Drennan weakly. "There is only a chance—"

"For God's sake, sir, take advantage of that chance, no matter how very slender it is! If she *is* there, sir, behind that locked and bolted door, her life hangs by a thread—the life which you swore two hours ago to cherish. If there is *any* doubt in your mind as to the amount of your self-control, for God's sake give her the better chance for her life and let the door be broken down!"

Drennan Scott clenched his hands. Little flecks of blood stained his lips. "I *will* control myself," he said. "I shall not fail you!" He pressed past the detective and gave a peculiar knock upon the door. It was not heeded.

He knocked again and then looked across at John Gurley, who raised his brows significantly. "Rani!" he called out sharply. "I am in a hurry. Let me in!"

There was still no answer. "You carried no key, sir—to these apartments?" asked Gurley.

Drennan glanced across at Ailsie and flushed. "I carried no key—I had no

use for any," he said shortly. He was careful to lower his voice so that it could not carry beyond the fast-barred door.

He lifted his voice again. "Let me in, Rani—quickly!" he called out sharply. "Something terrible has happened and it is most important that I speak to you."

On the inside of the room, this time, steps sounded—a key turned in the bolt and the Hindoo's dark, sinister face appeared in the narrow opening. Fortunately only Drennan was visible—not the little group huddled in the corner beyond. "Are you sure that it is quite safe, sir?" Rani asked respectfully. But Drennan Scott's confidence in the man was shaken for the first time when he noticed a certain breathlessness about the Hindoo's lean face—a certain horrible, nameless quality which the cruel mouth only half concealed.

"It is not safe—it is *never* safe," Scott said monotonously. "Nevertheless, it is imperative, Rani. And it is much safer for you to hear what I have to say inside the room than out here in the hall. There is something that I must say to you."

The Hindoo still hesitated. "*She* is more restless and nervous than usual to-night," he said, with a level glance over his shoulder toward the inner room. "The crowd downstairs—the music and laughter—the noise and the confusion—have all been very bad for her. And we have been able to hear it all even through the locked and bolted doors." He hesitated a little between every word, but his English was as faultless as Scott's own.

"I must come in, nevertheless, and assume the risk of harming her—I would not do it if it could be helped," said the young man still quietly. "I tell you, something terrible has happened, Rani! You warned me, you know, of the evil which the pearls might bring—" He slipped the leash of his hard-earned self-control, as a hound would drop the loop that held him bound. "My wife has disappeared, Rani," he said fiercely. "My wife has been stolen from me—from Deephurst—within sound of my lifted voice! I

am quitting my home to-night to be gone only God knows how long! Either I will find her or else—"

Rani's brown face blanched and his thin lips crooked wryly. "Missing—disappeared!" he said—but Drennan Scott noticed, and beyond him Gurley, as well, that the door never moved an inch.

Unable to communicate with Gurley even by signs, Drennan Scott took under the circumstances the only step possible and attempted to force matters to an issue. "Let me come inside the room, Rani," he said. "We can lower our voices so that she cannot hear us."

The door opened a little further, the voice of command to which the Hindoo had listened so long still carrying with it a certain measure of authority. And with even that slight yielding of the barricade, Drennan Scott flung himself with every ounce of strength at his command against it.

The Hindoo, prepared for everything else, was not prepared for that particular emergency. Lithe as a cat, however, he met the attack against him with unparalleled quickness and audacity. Had Drennan been alone, the contest could only have ended in one way. As it was, the issue was not long in doubt. Over Drennan Scott's shoulder the East Indian caught sight of Smither's burly figure and saw the gleam of the weapon in Gurley's hand. He wheeled like a flash.

Gurley was clever enough to understand his purpose. "Trip him, Smithers!" he cried. "If he reaches that inner door—shoot!"

With Drennan, the matter was very soon decided, for the Hindoo handled him like an infant. His long, thin fingers closed about the young man's throat, and Drennan Scott went suddenly limp. But at that, burly Smithers shot out a brawny fist and took the Hindoo under the point of the chin.

"Playing it too fine, Smithers—you were playing it too fine," growled Gurley disapprovingly. "A very little more and it would have been all day with Scott. The Hindoo is worse than a rattlesnake."

Suddenly something—a sort of instinct possibly—took John Gurley by

the throat, cutting off his speech as effectually as the East Indian's hands had cut off Drennan's breathing. He leaped across the room, carrying the door of the inner apartment before him as if it had been made of flimsy paper. And he was just *barely* in time—and no more! Eleanor Scott was stooping, huddled in a little disheveled heap in one corner of the room, while above her, with a slender, keen, narrow-bladed knife in her hand, squatted and jabbered a thing that had once been a woman. And as Gurley flung himself at the two madly—the blade of the knife went home!

The dahlias were all gone and the chrysanthemums in their place had met the first onslaught of winter unhurt. Their petals were a little twisted and discolored, but they are twin-sisters to the frost, and as it happens, they love their kinship. Seated in a low chair in a sunny corner of the wide veranda at Deephurst was Eleanor Scott—a little paler, perhaps, than her wedding day had found her, but otherwise quite recovered from the horrible experience that had marked her introduction to her husband's home. Drennan Scott lounged lazily at her feet, while John Gurley leaned against the veranda rail and smoked his cigar.

"It is a thing like *that*, that makes it touch and go with our profession," the detective said meditatively. "It's a *little* too near a thing, Scott—if you ask me."

Drennan Scott shuddered. "I saw Rani Sing to-day," he said somberly. "A month, barely, the doctors give him now. It will always be a wonder to *me*, how the man could carry the grudge against me that he did, Gurley, without betraying it. He had had a thousand opportunities of taking my life, and yet more than once he had saved it at the risk of his own."

The great detective shrugged his shoulders carelessly. "I asked Manners to-day, what put him onto the Hindoo, but he didn't give me very much satisfaction. Manners makes rather a secret of his methods. He owes much of his success to that, I think. He's a coming man in the profession now—Man-

ners is. By the way, I wish that you would tell me something about the woman, Scott."

Scott winced. Without speaking, his wife leaned forward a little and without even turning her head, or shifting her glance from the purple reaches beyond the Deephurst Road, she slipped her hand in his.

"The Rajah was my friend," said Drennan soberly. "He—was more than that. I went out to Jawnpore under a misapprehension—I expected to meet a chap who had promised to give me employment, but when I reached the place, I found that he had paid lasting tribute to the climate and that they had buried him the week before. I was strapped and I didn't know a soul in the place except Deepford and he was no better off financially than I was. I had had trouble with my uncle here at home and I knew very well that it was no use to appeal to him.

"And then, to put the fitting climax to my misfortunes, I got into trouble in Jawnpore. No, I am not going into that, Gurley. It's all past and gone now. I was as innocent as a baby, but it hurt like the devil at the time and the way I was situated financially, gave the thing a particularly nasty look. Without help of some sort, it meant prison for me—prison and disgrace and a share in the same refuge with Dawson, poor chap, in less than a month. And just at this juncture the Rajah stepped in."

His voice broke. "No brother could have done for me what he did, and no brother could have done it in the same way. I can't talk about that either, without turning into a baby or a fool. The Rajah was beginning to hear the first mutterings of the storm then—the one in which he lost his life. But you would never have known it. And he had no selfish motive for what he did, when he came to my aid, either—so much I know.

"Later—much later—he asked me, after giving me everything on earth he had, to care for the pearls and the woman who was even then, although he had never suspected it, beginning to lose her mind. I consented—I was a romantic fool then. That night the

Rajah, the woman whom he loved, Rani Sing (who was a sort of majordomo about the palace) and I—went through hell together. The Rajah—you know what happened to him. Solely owing to Rani, who saved my life over and over again, the three of us who were left made our way out of the palace after that long, interminable night of horror, and for days and days we remained hidden, victims over and over of hair-breadth escapes. It is no wonder that the woman's mind, impaired before, went to pieces utterly long before the day I succeeded in smuggling her and Rani, under the guise of a high-caste Hindoo and his son, on a ship that was homeward bound."

He hesitated again, for so long this time that Eleanor's glance quitted the shadows beyond the Deephurst Road and her eyes rested confidently on her husband's face. "I had sworn a solemn oath to the Rajah that I would never breathe a word about the woman's identity,—there were many men in our country who knew him,—that I would never allow her to become the object either of scorn or pity—in short, that if I had to leave India I would never allow anyone, save myself or Rani, to look upon her face.

"I kept my word until the day I broke it to save my wife's life. How the unhappy creature ever learned of my coming marriage, God only knows. From the beginning and from the night we fled together, she confused me with the Rajah himself. I pitied her, but—the victim of a foolish, almost a criminal promise—I still believe that I was more to be pitied than she was."

"Go on!" said the detective. "What about Rani?"

"Rani, too, changed—I have tried to find out why, but his replies so far have not been very satisfactory. I believe that Rani—he is clever and well educated—thought that he had contracted lung trouble. I believe that he fancied that a return to India would mean life to him—and I believe that he was half-mad from brooding over his ill-health and the loss of the wealth that would have been his had I kept out of the Rajah's way. His resentment

smoldered until he became conscious that my marriage with Eleanor was a thing irrevocably decided upon. He did his best to kill me that day when he followed down the Deephurst road."

"Well," remarked Gurley, "the woman's death ended her part of it. Really, when she turned the knife to her own bosom as the door was broken down, she simplified things considerably. I dare say for the moment she confounded the occasion with the burning and sacking of the palace and the murder of her lover. And Rani's death will close the rest of the story."

"Not quite!" said Drennan Scott softly. He looked down into his wife's face. "We are going up to town next month, Gurley," he added irrelevantly. "After that, Deephurst will be closed

for a season, for we will be abroad. There is a famous artist in Paris who has promised to paint Eleanor as a royal queen in velvet and ermine—and the Rajah's pearls."

Gurley nodded approvingly. "Good work!" he said heartily. He glanced at Eleanor again and gave utterance to a compliment which Eleanor's husband often said was the most genuine one which his wife had ever received. "I would like to see it—that picture—with the sun shining on it and the same light in your wife's eyes that there is now—when she looks at you," he said quietly. "I'll venture to say without flattery, Mr. Scott, that no earthly queen that was ever crowned could possibly look more royally beautiful than the mistress of Deephurst."

Captains Cantankerous

By CASPAR JOHNSON

BY THE starboard rail of the big three-sticker, *Harriet Miller*, Captain Jim Holmes, a pair of marine glasses glued to his eyes, stood watching a trailing line of smoke in the southwest.

The autumnal gale, having done its worst, was over; but the sea was still running strongly, and the battered schooner slopped and wallowed over each oncoming sea, like some stricken, tired thing, fighting wearily and half-heartedly for its life. Forward of the house the pumps *chunk-chunk-ed*, *chunk-chunk-ed* monotonously as the worn-out crew labored, sleepily and with many guttural grumbings, at the brake-bars.

For two days and two nights now, those pumps had been going incessantly, and their creaking song had got on to the nerves of the tired men.

One glance at the *Harriet Miller* was enough to show that she had been through the very worst of the gale. Her fore and main topmasts were nothing but splintered butts, sticking up in mute testimony to the force of the tempest; her jib-topsail and her fore-stay-sail were among the missing; her deck was swept clean of boats and gear and there was a great, ragged, flapping rent in her spanker from boom to gaff.

Moreover, that incessant whine of the pumps told its own ominous story; and the fact that each hour the schooner banged more heavily into the seas, and became more and more like a dead thing, gave incontrovertible evidence that, despite all the desperate work day and night, the water in the hold was slowly but surely gaining.

By such dead reckonings as he could make, the skipper estimated their posi-

tion as some twenty or thirty miles east-southeast of the Breakwater. That would mean that they were now well within the bounds where help might be expected. But as to the nature of that help the skipper, from long experience in these waters, was more than a little suspicious. Therefore he eagerly watched the little dot slowly forging into view beneath the trailing smoke to the southeast.

Presently Gus Hault, the mate, a big, yellow-haired Dane, came to the skipper's side. He, too, looked long and earnestly at that patch of smoke on the sky, before he spoke.

"That looks good to me, Cap'n," he observed at length, and there could be no doubt of the relief in his tones.

The skipper merely grunted.

"Headin' up this way and walkin' right along, aint she?" said Hault. "Might be a fruit boat, mightn't it?"

"It might be, but it aint, unless I lose my guess," Holmes snapped.

"It's something, anyway," said Hault, "and it's heading our way. Lord knows we need help. She aint going to float a terrible sight longer. Water's gaining faster and the crew is that wore out they can't get no lift to speak of in the pumps."

Again the skipper merely grunted, as he continued to gaze at the smoke streak. At last he took the glasses from his eyes.

"Git down that distress signal we've got up, quick!" he commanded. "That aint no fruit boat, nor nothing like it. I know that feller coming and know him darned well, too. He's looking to ketch us in just some such fix as this, and bleed the life out of us. That's Perry Jones in the tug *Nautilus* coming up, and what he wouldn't charge us to tow us up the bay if he realized how bad off we was, wouldn't be worth mentioning.

"Hey you, for'ard, stop them pumps!" he turned to shout at the laboring men.

"Will that do, sir?" asked the mate doubtfully.

Holmes favored him with a cold stare. "Think I'm going to pay all this schooner and her cargo is worth to get towed up?" he snarled. "You take an-

other guess if you think anything like that. You, Larsen and Flanders, up aloft and saw smooth them topmast butts; make it look as if we'd housed 'em. The rest of you get down the spanker. There aint no use advertising our troubles with that big hole in it. Lively, now!"

The mate, grumbling his doubts, moved forward to execute the skipper's orders. The whirl of the wheezing pumps ceased. From aloft came the sound of rasping saws; down dropped the torn and flapping spanker, to go incontinently into its stops.

With one swift look about the decks, Holmes picked up the glasses to watch the oncoming tug.

Her hull was plainly visible now through the glasses. She came surging buoyantly over the huge seas, a froth of white at her bows proclaiming the speed she was summoning to bear down on her supposed victim. Nearer she came and nearer; but long before she hove to alongside, the *Harriet Miller's* topmast butts were sawed flat; her spanker was furled; the pumps lay idle, and slowly but surely she was settling deeper in the water.

Out of the pilot-house of the *Nautilus*, Perry Jones thrust his big, grizzled head, took one swift, sardonic, comprehensive look at the schooner and picked up his megaphone.

"How're ye, Cap'n Holmes?" he belled across the water. "Been some blow, aint it?"

Holmes, too, had taken his smaller megaphone from the top of the after house, where it had been placed for just such an exigency as this.

"Oh, we ketched a little breeze up off the Inlet," he belled back nonchalantly. "Nothing much to speak of."

Again Jones ran his eye over the schooner and grinned meaningly. On the tug's lower deck the cook came out of his galley, wiping his parboiled hands on his dingy apron; one of the engineers thrust his head out of the engine-room. Both men were gazing at the schooner and grinning in much the same manner as the captain in the pilot-house above.

"Want a tow, don't ye?" Jones suggested.

Holmes seated himself with studied carelessness on the coamings of the schooner's after house.

"I dunno," he yelled demurringly through the megaphone. "I guess so long as we've come this fur we can work her up the bay without no trouble. Still, we might let ye hook onto us if you was reasonable enough. How much to take us up—hey?"

Jones' eyes narrowed craftily. "I guess it aint a case of maybe taking a tow," he shouted back. "It's a case of havin' to have one. You're in bad, Cap'n. I see you pumpin' as I was comin' up. Don't deny you've opened up pretty near every seam in her and that she's taking water like a sieve!"

"Water nothing!" yelled Holmes. "I got in twelve hundred of stone. That's what puts her down so."

"Guess then the stone's getting heavier right along," sneered Jones. "She's settled more'n a little since we come."

He took another look aloft. "And don't think I aint wise to them top-m'sts neither. You can't fool me none by sawing 'em flat; and say, I dare ye to h'ist that spanker. What's the matter? All tore up, aint it? I'll get ye up the bay, though, for five hundred dollars."

Holmes made a wry face and accompanied it with a lurid remark which, quite as he intended, did not reach the man in the tug's pilot-house."

"Five hundred be everlastingly tormented!" he howled. "I'll give ye a hundred and fifty to take us up, you blamed harpy of a pirate, and that's robbery, at that!"

There was a burst of raucous laughter from the tug. Jones held his fat sides in his mirth.

"You aint in no position to make no bargains," Jones reminded him. "You gotter let us hook on sooner or later—and a good deal of emphasis on the sooner, I guess, unless you want to sink. Better make the best of it and not waste any time. That offer is a scaling one. It goes up fifty dollars every half-hour you delay."

"Let her scale," roared the skipper, getting off the house and turning his back, quite as if the interview, so far as he was concerned, was at an end.

"I'll stay by and watch ye settle down, till you're glad to come up with any price to me to hook on," Jones shouted.

"Stay and welcome!" Holmes muttered grimly under his breath, while he walked across the deck, to all outward appearances oblivious to the other's words.

An hour went past, with the schooner bobbing up and down and making but little headway, and the tug, with dead engines, drifting along beside her.

Gray dusk began to come on. The mate, white-lipped and very grave of face, sought the skipper.

"Them seams is opening wider," he said. "She can't stay afloat like this more'n a couple of hours longer."

"Then start your pumps," Holmes snapped.

"That'll be a confession of our condition," said Hault. "Wouldn't it be just as well to let him hook on now? We're sure in bad shape, sir."

"No!" Holmes thundered. "Let him guess our condition, or know it if he wants to. I don't pay no five hundred to go up the bay. I got a card or two in this game up my sleeve yet. Start them pumps as I tell you, and don't be so free with your suggestions."

Still the mate hesitated. "The men, sir," he began haltingly, "they are getting sorter out of hand. They think—"

"I'm doing all the thinking aboard this craft," Holmes growled. "Can't you handle them poor shoats, for'ard? 'Cause, if you can't, I'll come for'ard myself with a brake-bar and see what can be done. What ails you? Are you getting scared too? Thought you called yourself a seaman, when I shipped you!"

Flushing guiltily under his coat of tan, the mate went forward, muttering to himself under his breath. Once more the whine of the pumps began complainingly. The skipper took a look at the swashing tug alongside, noted the deck-hand running up her lights, and grinned very quietly to himself. The mate came aft to note the course, and as he did so, Holmes stepped to the man at the wheel.

"Change her course," he said shortly. "Put her sou'west by south," he or-

dered. "And Mr. Hault, get up that torn spanker. Here's where we play our best cards. Even torn as it is, it will help her along wonderful. Breeze is stiffening a bit, too."

The mate looked utterly bewildered.

"Sou'west by south!" he breathed, softly, his lips close to the skipper's ears. "That'll take us straight to Red Horse Shoals."

"Maybe I know that, quite as well as you," said the skipper sourly. "Up with that spanker."

Up went the spanker. The schooner began to forge ahead. Astern, there came a clang of bells, the whirr and rattle of machinery; the tug came poking indolently after her all but captured quarry.

It grew darker, but through the flying cloud-rift overhead an occasional star began to show feebly.

The skipper beckoned the mate beside him.

"Don't get scared," he counseled. "There's a way of getting across old Red Horse for a craft of our draught. I know it. We're going across to-night. Tug's going to try to follow. She's too deep draught. She'll hit. Then we get in our licks. This wind is coming good and stiff from the sou'west before long. That'll be just about what we want."

"Those are desperate chances," said the mate.

"Are you game or not?" Holmes asked the mate curtly, looking him steadily in the eye—so steadily that the mate's eyes finally fell.

"I'm game," he averred, although in the flare of the binnacle lamp his face whitened.

"All right, then," said Holmes. "We are getting close to the shoals now. You take the wheel. I'll go for'ard with the lead. I'll put Larsen amidships to pass my orders to you. When I give you the course, put her on it as if it was your last chance, and don't vary a hair from it, neither."

He picked up the sounding-lead and strode forward. The mate, his teeth biting into his under lip, pushed away the man at the wheel and gripped the spokes until the horny palms of his hands were sore from the pressure.

Down they wallowed to the shoals, the lead going every minute, and the skipper's bellowed orders were relayed by Larsen to the mate at the wheel.

Breakers sounded all too close for comfort.

"Nor'nor'west!" bellowed the skipper. "Larsen, tell them lazy landlubbers to hike it up with the pumps!"

A swirl of foam shot over the schooner's creaking bows.

"West by no'th, half west!" thundered the skipper.

One quick glance astern showed him the tug's lights bobbing up and down as she came after them. He chuckled as he imagined Jones in the pilot-house, cursing to himself and putting up that towing price by great leaps and bounds.

Then another quick glance astern filled him with a sudden desire to whoop his lungs out. The tug's lights, stationary now, were dropping rapidly astern. She had struck in just the spot he had counted upon.

It was a wild trip across the shoals that night in the all but disabled schooner; the lead was going constantly, the skipper's fearless orders coming quick and fast, the spray and spume coming over them in great clouds, the hull creaking and the rigging straining and whining. But by some miracle which the mate, looking back on those stressful hours, could never quite understand, they came through safe, struck the deeper and safer waters on the other side, ran round the western end of the shoals, the pumps now going desperately, and so came back to the point where they had entered the dangerous stretch of water.

The *Nautilus* lay hard and fast on the outer edge of the shoal; men ran excitedly to and fro about her deck; great rollers swept her lower deck from stem to stern; the swash and pound of her reversed screw told that she was trying vainly with might and main to back off.

Holmes ran his schooner in quite close to her, and with a smile of triumph picked up the megaphone.

"Guess you need a little help!" he bellowed.

A torrent of lurid profanity was the only response.

He waited for a quarter-hour.

"What do you say if I take a hawser from ye and square away?" he suggested. "Wind's fair for it, and what with the added pull the schooner could give ye, I guess ye might get off."

Where the crew of the tug told him they would see him first is quite beside this story; nevertheless they told him flatly they would see him there before accepting his offer.

"Tide's going down on ye," Holmes roared through his megaphone. "Sea's getting rougher in there, too. Better heave us a line and let us help ye off. You wont last a great while if you don't get off before the tide ketches ye there for good. I'm reasonable in my charges, too. Only a hundred dollars and a free tow up the bay. Better take it up, too, right away. It's a scaling offer—goes up a hundred dollars every fifteen minutes."

Again those aboard the tug suggested a fitting place of residence for the grinning Holmes; but at the end of a futile quarter-hour they hailed him.

"Stand in to take that heaving-line!" shouted Jones. "You've got us!"

"All right," Holmes replied. "It's two hundred now, though, and a free tow, and two men of your crew aboard of us to help with the pumps."

"Stand in!" Jones shouted back. "You're on!"

At noon the next day, the *Nautilus* dropped the *Harriet Miller* at a berth by the big dry-docks up the river.

Perry Jones, disgustedly running the *Nautilus* over to her dock and stepping ashore, was greeted by a brother tow-boat man.

"That feller you just brought up, Perry, was pretty badly bunged up, wa'n't he?" suggested the man on the wharf. "Must 'a' got a whalin' old fee outer him."

"Yah, he was bunged up terrible," groaned the disgusted Mr. Jones. "Bunged up so bad you can have him next time he comes this way and find out for yourself what fee you'll get."

Whereupon Perry Jones, to the unbounded amazement of the other, turned on his heel and stalked wrathfully up the wharf, overlooking the precedent-established custom of asking the other to wet things down a bit at The Canteen, at the head of the wharf—where, from time immemorial, it has been the wont of tow-boat men to celebrate mildly, when they have come up the river with a victim found in distress outside and very properly bled to the last cent the said victim will stand.

The Golden Kris of Hadji Mohammed

By FREDERICK FERDINAND MOORE

GIVE alms—in the name of Allah, give alms."

The old familiar whine made me turn, for that plea did not belong on the water front of San Francisco, where almost anything can be heard. I knew it was addressed to me, both by the Arabic and something in the voice of the man. I turned and looked at him.

He grinned and winked the lids of his empty eye socket, and then I knew him, for it happened that I had taken that eye out with my thumb on the other side of the world. But we were friends, for we had measured our strength and courage in the dark, and after you have fought with a man he may still be your friend. He was a pirate at home, where his forbears had

been pirates for centuries; he did not belong on the water front of San Francisco, but down on the coasts of Sulu. But great men in all professions some day see San Francisco—and Peruk is a great pirate.

I took his hand and spoke to him in the vernacular, haltingly, and glanced toward the transport dock to see which troopship had brought him in. He saw the question in my eyes.

"I am here on a small matter of business," he said quietly. "I promised my brother, who has died since you left—peace to his soul—that I would kill a man for him, and when the man came here there was nothing for me to do but to come. I will go back when I have cut the throat of him."

Peruk is a Moro, with the blood of an Arab, and some of the Malay; he has raided the seas from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca, and as he spoke to me, there was a price upon his head, to be given by the government in Washington if the government of Mindanao could find him. But we were friends, for I had hooked out his eye while he was trying to make two of me in the dark. He keeps nothing from me, so I did not go running to the police; for why should I interfere with a blood feud that began on the other side of the world?

He showed me a sack of pearls, so I knew he was not seeking alms. He could buy a city block if he had wanted it—or would know what to do with it once he came into possession of the purchase.

"Know thou," said he, speaking in his own tongue, when we were in a quiet place, "Know thou, that you came near to having the honor of being killed with the golden *kris* of Sultan Hadji Mohammed?" He smiled, and enjoyed his cigaret.

"In what manner?" I asked.

"It was under you, lying flat, the night you got my eye. If I could have turned it, you would have seen the seven cities of Paradise. By the eyes of my youngest wife, but this place is too cold for men."

"The golden *kris* of the Sultan of Berotan? It seems that I have heard of it from a man of Jolo. But what he

said I cannot remember, being sure he was talking falsehoods that he might cheat me in the hire of a boat. I am lonesome here for a smell of the jungle and am but a man in a cage. Tell me the story of the golden *kris*. I would almost be willing to let you cut at me with it if I could go back to Berotan and see the pearly fleet come home."

"My brother knew the story better than I, for I was of it, and he saw it all. But my brother is dead, and I am here to kill for him."

"Peace to your brother," I said, for the Moros talk much of peace—and do much fighting. "Tell me the story, Peruk."

"It had been a good year for the men of what you call Torres," he replied, "and the last time, we came up from Borneo with many pearls, six slaves and two women. Friend, there are many fine women in this city of the infidels."

"The golden *kris*," I said; and this is the tale he told to me:

There is but one god and he is Allah and Mohammed is his prophet; and I say to you now, here in this city of infidels, where it is so cold that the marrow in my legs curls like a breaker of the Celebes, that once in my life was I afraid; and then it was of a woman.

I have slain many men, and my brother, who is dead, has likewise slain many men; and he was a brave man, as all of my blood—which you know. Yet I tell you that for three days I was slave to a woman; a man never can say his prayers and know that before he rise, a woman will not command with the eyes of her soul—

This is talk without wisdom.—We went out to the south in a big *vinta*, and passed many pearlers, a sight which saddened our hearts. We went among the islands south of Berotan, where there are so many that a man could almost walk over the sea. They grow up, say some people, where the bodies of the faithful went down after fights with the infidel—which may be true, but there are many false things, as the Koran tells us, and much evil.

We were in the service of the sultan, looking for a strange boat. Karan, son

of Heesh, whose father was a *datto* and whose mother was a woman of white skin owned by a sultan in Borneo many years ago, took the story of it to Sultan Hadji Mohammed, *salip* and descendant of the prophet, whose true name is Ali. White sails had the boat, he said, with the cross of the unbeliever wrought in the sail, of thread of gold; it had a high stern and high bows, was deep in the middle, and very ancient.

In it was a woman of white skin and hair of gold, who wrapped herself in bright silks and each day prayed to the sun twice, at dawn and dark, on a prayer rug like the carpet of an houri. And she was beautiful beyond the dreams of men, who worship beauty in women and sometimes neglect their gods.

I heard that the sultan swore a great oath when he heard the tale, and he sent for me.

"Peruk," he said to me, "Peruk, you are a great man and your father was a great man."

"True," I said, wondering if he were going to raise my taxes or give my head to the Americans for a basket of gold. He had given me the right to take pearlers, and I knew he wanted something more than the tax and protection he gave me. Since your government went down there it has been serious business to kill men and take their goods, and in my business of taking pearlers I have to kill many. So he could command me, as he was offering much gold for my head himself, to keep his face with your government while he was taking his share of the pearls I gathered.

"True," I said to him. "Your father, the sultan, was a great man and a great sultan, and you are a great son and a great sultan."

"When my father died, peace to him," answered the sultan, "he gave me a golden *kris*. It had two edges, sharp as the rim of the world, and it would cleave a man from the top of his head to his heart with a single blow. The handle was of mother-of-pearl, with a ruby on each side, and it was a brave knife. On each side, written on the blade in Arabic, were these

words: 'Put not thy faith in women, for all women are unfaithful.'

"This *kris* was used only to kill the unfaithful women of the harem, and it lay in a secret place, and never did my father have to use it, and never did I have to use it, for all the women of my household knew of it and feared it.

"While you were away on business, Peruk, it happened that Datto Hadji Rano returned from Mecca, bringing to me a young woman, pink as the heart of a pearl and more beautiful than the beauty of ten thousand beautiful women. Her hair was of gold—the dark, red gold that comes from the mountains of Borneo—and when she wept I could hear the angels weeping for my sins at the gates of Paradise.

"For seven days, as is the law, she was alone in the bridal chamber, veiled with seven veils and wrapped in silks of the rainbow which cost me in Singapore the price of two hundred Dyak slaves.

"At the hour half between dawn and dark I went to her. She was not weeping, and my heart was filled with joy. With my own hands I cast aside the hangings, and she stood in the light of the seven lamps, with her face uncovered like an unbeliever, and the jewels on her arms cutting the light like a thousand daggers. In one hand she held the golden *kris* with the point against her throat, and in her other hand, upraised, the cross of the infidel.

"She said to me, the sultan, in a voice of liquid gold: 'This blade has falsehood upon it. In the house of my father there are faithful women. I am pledged to no man, and no pledge will I make to you unless you say that this blade has falsehood.'

"I said: 'I am the sultan. Raise not that cross under this roof.'

"She said to me: 'Come and take me, and I will die in the faith of the unbeliever, of which I know much; but I am no wife of yours if you do not say this blade lies.'

"'Put not your faith in women, for all women are unfaithful,' I said to her and laughed. 'Give proof to me that it is not so.'

"'You shall say that the blade lies,

and until you have said it I will not be wife of you, though you make me sultana, as you say. By the white in my blood you shall say it before I make you the marriage pledge, or I will die by the blade of falsehood.'

"There was rage in my heart for a time, and then I turned my back on her and laughed and walked away, telling her that I would come at dawn. But when I returned, she was gone, and the golden *kris* with her. That was five years past.

"When my anger had cooled, I found that with her had gone Datto Hadji Rano, and with him treasure from my house. They had escaped in a swift prao with ten warriors.

"First I cursed the loss of the golden *kris*, and then the loss of the unfaithful woman, and then I cursed the Datto for a thief and a mover of dead bodies, with a prayer that his bones might rest with the bones of an unshriven, thrice-cursed slayer of a holy man.

"Vengeance never dies in my heart, and I will have this woman and the golden *kris*, and I will hang the head of Datto Hadji Rano from the city gate; and death to him and her will be a joy when I have done with them. Now this woman that Haran, son of Heesh tells of, is the woman who took the golden *kris*. She was stolen from the house of an infidel holy man somewhere in the land that borders the Red Sea. Bring her to me, Peruk, with the ghost of the man who brought her to me and then stole her from me. This I tell you to do, Peruk."

With ten fighting men, and my brother, who is dead, and Haran, we set out in a *vinta* of the sultan. Haran, he of the mixed blood, was to show us the way to the ship of dreams, which was cast up on the shore of an island, as he said. And I swore that if there were treasure I would have it, and only to the sultan would I deliver the woman, and Datto Hadji Rano and the golden *kris*. Blood of my fathers! Would I go on such an errand for any man, sultan or thief, without putting in my purse whatever I might gather? Not Peruk!

Four days we sailed among the is-

lands, and true it is that my sword hand itched as I saw the pearlers running north, with never a thought that the hawk, Peruk, was close at their heels. I and my brother cursed twenty times a day the golden *kris* and all the evil things that had driven us to sea on the gossip of old women, to come back empty handed.

It was foolish business. We might have taken many a rich pearler as we ran over the blue water looking for this ship that grew in the brain of a madman; and so I told my brother, and so he told me. Ten good men we had, all armed and ready to fight while there was life in their veins—which is demanded of all men who sail with me, as you know.

To Haran I said I would cut off his ears if we did not find this boat.

But he would kiss my feet and say: 'Master, it is as I told the good Sultan Mohammed,' but I called him vermin of baggage camels, doubting his word for a thieving silk merchant who robs his own friends for profit. I thank my father that he made of me an honest man, and no merchant.

The night of the fourth day there was a moon, and the helmsman shook me. He had picked up a light where there should be no light, and as I looked, it disappeared. We were in the pool of devils, where the sea burns under the bows, and holy men say that if you look close you can see the souls of those pursued of devils. We lay to for the night on a silken sea, watching for the light. Twice it winked at us, and was lost, and we knew not what to do or where to go, fearing that it might be one of your gunboats, and that the master would ask too many questions; but we were honest men if we could conceal our heavy weapons.

Before the sun flamed up, we saw the ship, and it was the wonder of us all. Far up in a little bay it was, tight as a miser's pocket, a big Spanish ship, old as a woman that has mothered seven generations. One mast was left, and the hull of her was all green with grass that grew in her seams and the vines that hung over her decks.

"Master," said Haran, "Master, it is as I spoke. That is the ship."

"Son of a slave," I told him, "that is old as the bearded bullock of the Ashtin Desert, and no ship, but the bones of a ship."

"I have spoken," he said.

We ran in swiftly, taking much care for reefs, and a sharp eye on the ancient ship, with our weapons at hand, and the men stripped. We were close up to her, within three boat lengths, when a big black man rose up at the bulwarks and speaking in the tongue of the men of Labuan, asked what we would have.

"Water," said my brother. "In the name of the prophet, water, that we may drink and live to praise Allah." But the black had seen our weapons and cried out and hid himself below the bulwarks. And before our eyes uprose a great brown sail, and on it, shining like a brass fire-pan, we saw the cross of the infidel in cloth of gold, and beneath it the crown of the Spanish. We held on until we came near to driving our bow through the side of the ship, and then swarmed over the side.

It was slippery work, with twenty against us, all big blacks with *kampilans*, and arms thick as the heart of a banyan and breasts on them like the brown rock-cliffs of the northern islands. They stood up against us like devils with a thousand lives. It was slippery work and the soft, rotten deck was like a red sponge when we had finished. They fought naked, and as they swung at us, they grunted like baggage-camels under heavy loads. Silently we fought, with the only sounds the slithering of sharp steel in flesh and the sucking of the red torrents through the holes made by the borer worms in the rotten deck-planks.

But six of our men lived when we were done. We stood before the door of the house in the stern. The wind came in from the sea and fluttered the old sail, which was made fast to a bamboo yard with *bejuca*. That old ship was like the corpse of a man dead ten thousand years. It was of the ships my ancestors looted, and my grandfather told us of them when we were babes first learning to hold a blade. He made us feel very brave as he told us tales

of white men in rich clothes from Spain, wearing jeweled swords—good fighting men, he said.

The ship must have been there from the time of the Malay raid, five hundred years ago, or near to that, as a man could see with one eye. The jungle had grown down to her, and the vines hung over her decks and the creepers were fast in the rotten ports on the starboard side. As we stood there before the door, a little yellow bird circled in and sat on the bamboo yard and sang a prayer as he looked at the red work of the morning.

I and my brother stood before the door of the house in the stern. It was strongly made, to protect treasure or women, of brown, heavy wood, with much polished brass, and the cross of the infidel made upon it with bronze nails, and the crown of Spain.

Along the deck, leading to the fore-castle, was a lane made by the tread of thousands of bare feet, and we knew that the ship was used for a house. There was a ladder to the high after deck, partly rotted away, but made new with bamboo, old and dry and polished.

I and my brother wondered if we should go in the door, when it fell back and a big black, girl in a purple *sarong* and bearing a knife, stood before us.

"Peace," he said. "Peace!" He spoke in the tongue of those who come from the islands near what is called Java, if that is right.

We gave him the blessings of Allah and the peaceful greeting and made the sign, and I smiled in my heart as I saw my brother's lip curl and his thumb caress the edge of his best blade. He was looking at the fat, sleek fellow in the door and wondering, I knew well, how hard a blow it would take to open him like the carcass of a sheep. My brother had fought in Somali and could strike a fearful blow, a blow that would gladden your heart. My brother, peace to him, was a great fighting man, as were all of my blood, and are still, as you know. I remember an uncle of mine who ran *amok* at a marriage feast in a town of the *datto*—

"But the black man in the door," I said, knowing Peruk's love of telling the valiant deeds of his family, and

fearing that he might forget the story of the golden *kris*.

"Peace," he said to us, and "Peace," we said to him, and made the sign, knowing we could kill him when we would. He turned and bent his neck and made way, and we saw rich curtains and heard the rattle of shell beads, and at that time there stood before us a woman, holding in her hand the golden *kris* of Hadji Mohammed, Sultan of Berotan.

May the soul of my dead brother smite me thrice, but I speak what is true. She was a woman of Paradise, girt up with strings of pearls, and wrapped about her was a scarlet robe of silk, and on her feet *chinelas* of blue turning up at the toe like the Turks or Algerines; and she wore a girdle of opals strung on the dried sinew of the leg of an *urang*, and her hair was a sunset in the Gulf of Annam, and her lips the first flush of dawn at Bab el Mandeb after a storm—friend, but she was a woman for a king of the world!

In her hand she held the *kris* of gold, and her hair—hair that flamed like the crater of Taal on a night of blackness—was sprinkled with the little white blossoms of the *ylang-ylang*, and it fell to her hips. A small woman she was, and as she stood there I could see the suppleness of her and the beauty of her, as she stood up like a sultana with her head thrown back and her bare arms like pillars of coral—friend, she was a woman!

"Who, what and whence?" she demanded, never looking at the deck nor glancing at my men tossing the bodies to the sharks.

It is not my way to allow a woman to command, but this woman made a knot come in the throat of me and I caught my breath like a child in pain. I heard my brother murmur in much amaze at her voice and manner of speaking. It was the ripple of the water before a war *proa* in the moonlight, soft and gentle and sweet, with much music in it, and a promise of Paradise.

I strangled the smile that would come at the strength of her heart, for there was none between her and us but the black man, although there may have been more below for what we knew.

It was good to see such a woman stand up before us, and I never dreamed that I would see such of any woman, for women are not warriors unless they have young at breast and the enemy be at the walls of the city.

I made the peace sign and stood up firmly on the two legs of me, like a *khalifa*, having in my blood much pride and in my mind the exploits of my ancestors, who kept many a sultan on his throne. This I did because I feared my knees might rattle together, for I had not settled in my mind that she was mortal—and the beauty of her made me feel weak.

"I am come for you, the golden *kris*, and Datto Hadji Rano," I said. "I speak with the voice of Hadji Mohammed, Sultan of Berotan, who is a powerful ruler, just and merciful, a descendant of the most illustrious prophet and a true believer. It is Peruk, who has sworn to make the *hadj* before Ramadan if Allah gives him life."

She smiled. She smiled, and I tell you I felt fear in my bones, which no man ever made me feel, for I am a brave man, and you know I speak truth.

"I ask who is this Datto Hadji Rano?" she said, cold as the winds of this city again.

"The deceiver of men and women, who took you from the sultan's house on the marriage night. Much better for you it would have been had you given your love to the sultan, and not to this thief of women."

"He is dead," she said, and then smiled upon me.

"Speak," I commanded. "In what manner did he die and for what reason and by whose hand? He shall answer to the sultan."

"By my hand and by this." She held up the golden *kris*. "Then the sultan wants me? Tell me what is written on this blade, that I may know you come from the sultan, and I will go."

"Put not thy faith in women, for all women are unfaithful," I said, like a boy telling a lesson to a holy marabout, and I heard my brother smile in his heart, and look at me as if I had been seized of an evil spirit. He made the sign to ward off devils, and seemed

to like not the glitter in the eyes of the woman.

"It is a false blade," she said. "I will tell the sultan that, and that is why I go back to him, but no man must lay hand upon me. Know now, how this *datto* Rano came to his death. He took me against my will from the bridal chamber; so the sultan thought I was a woman of the women he knows, and unfaithful, as is written on his *kris* of gold. I made no marriage pledge to him, but I am still faithful to him, for I slew the *datto* in the boat that night with this *kris* and for many days sailed to the south, for the men of the sea were better men than this *datto* or sultan and knew that all women are not to be taken like beasts of the jungle. So this blade of the sultan lies a black lie, and I go back with you to tell him that there are faithful women. If there be menace to me in your hearts, it will not be me but the dead body of me that you will take to your sultan. *Kismet*."

We made way for her and she walked into the *vinta*, attended by the big black, who carried out a basket of treasure, of which she would say no manner of thing as how it came to her hand. I knew her men had raided the seas for her. No one knew what was in the basket but me, and I told my brother. She took me in and showed it to me before it was borne out.

"This is yours," she told me. "It should take me to Berotan safe, and the sultan shall not have knowledge of it unless you will tell him." She smiled on me until I was in a torment in my mind if I should take the treasure in the basket or the treasure in the scarlet robe, and then I laughed at myself when I knew I might have both. When I was a younger man, friend, the women would turn—

Ay, you are right, friend. Peruk should keep to his tale and not be ever boasting of past love affairs—

My head was in a whirl, not knowing which I wanted most. By the soul of the first man I slew, but she had pearls big as the thumb of a bearer of burdens! But I was afraid of this woman—yes, I will tell it to you, I feared her, and I wondered if we should see Berotan again, with such a cargo.

We fired the old ship and as we ran out, the old sail with the cross of the unbeliever was burning, and the woman with the golden *kris* sat beside me in the stern, watching my men with eyes that were never still. We ran north under a fair wind, and when night put the sea to sleep, she still sat by my side, with the golden *kris* across her knees. My brother was in the bows and I fell asleep with the weariness of many thoughts.

The scream of a man brought me up, and as I wondered what it could be I heard a fluttering, which I knew to be the life dripping from a man's breast. I could see the woman against the fire of the wake.

"What is this?" I asked her.

"One of your swine," she said softly, and she held the blade of the golden *kris* in the water to clean it.

The black man helped me dump the dying man into the sea, which I did without knowing who he was, and caring little. I heard my brother speaking to the men forward sharply. There were murmurs in the crew.

"Tell them that I am a believer," she said to me. "I am of the blood of the infidel, and grew up in a mission and learned their prayers, and their virtues. I am a true believer, and this they must know, for I shall be brought safe to the sultan, that I may tell him he and his blade of gold do not speak the truth of women."

I marveled at her, for I had never seen such a woman. On my word she lay down and slept, with the naked blade of the *kris* across her bosom.

Before dawn came there were more murmurs among the men. I saw a big fellow crawl aft along the rail, but could not tell with my eyes who he was. She started out of her sleep, as if she could feel danger through her skin, but I put my hand on her arm as she was about to lift the golden *kris*. Then I rose up and slew the man and he fell into the sea. As his face was lit by the fire of the water I knew him for a Taureg whose father was a sheik.

Seeing what I had done she took my hand and put it on her neck, and by the life of me I felt as a sultan just come to his kingdom, for I had never

known a woman to do that out of all the women of my life. Friend, the unbelievers, who are of your blood, say there is one woman that comes to every man. There is but one god, and he is Allah and Mohammed is his prophet, but I believe with the unbelievers that this is true.

In three days we were at Berotan. The city was at the gate, and the women gathered at our heels, while the women of the men who had been slain whined, asking how they had come to their end. But I strode to the palace of the sultan with the woman of the golden *kris*, while my brother put the basket of treasure in a fish trap and drowned the man who helped. My brother always did such business well, peace to him.

I took her to the sultan, with murder in my heart that he should have her and not I, and bound that I would kill him if he took her life.

"This is the woman," he said, as she stood before him, and I had to go out, biting my thumb at loss of her and not knowing what she should say. The golden *kris* was concealed in her robe as she stood before him, and beside her was the black man.

I walked down to the city gate like a man in a dream, and before I went out there was a great tumult at the palace and much running about, and one of the bodyguard of the sultan went past me like a wild thing running before the hunters.

"The sultan is dead," he screamed, and then knowing that he would lose his head for not protecting his master, slew himself with a dagger on the end of the jetty. His body fell thence into the sea.

I went back to the palace. There was the sultan, dead, and on the floor the

body of the black man, who had been cut down, but the woman was not there.

No one had seen the blow struck at the sultan, but I winked my eye as I saw that there was no blood on the *kampilan* of the black, although they said the black had done the killing.

The woman I found in the council chamber, lying on the divan of the sultan. She held out her hand to me and smiled.

"You killed for me, Peruk," she said. "You are a man of men."

"You killed the sultan," I said, taking her hand.

"Deliver me to the headsman," she said. "If it had not been for you I would have killed myself, but you have faith in women." She took the golden *kris* from under her robes and stood it against the wall that it might dry.

"This is a lying blade," I told the sultan. "Behold a faithful woman, for I slew your dog of a *datto*, and I will be the wife of no man or no sultan who has no faith in women. At that I struck him on his fat neck, and put the *kris* in the hand of the black man, but took it again when the guards came in and ran him through."

Now I must go about my business here, or the soul of my brother will be wroth with me.

"And the woman?" I asked Peruk.

"Can you ask Peruk?"

He winked the lids of his empty-eye socket.

"When you come back to Berotan I will show you the sons of her. She is a faithful woman, and my lawful wife. It was the golden *kris* that was under you that night when you got my eye. You are one of three that know the story of the golden *kris*."



How Doolin Done It

By JOHN BARTON OXFORD

BEFORE the vestibule of the apartment house, at No. 167 Maywood St., Michael Doolin, the young and eminently successful contracting teamster, paused, squared his big shoulders, then stepped inside and pushed the button of "Suite 4."

"Who is it?" his right ear, glued to the speaking tube, heard the feminine voice, which always gave him delicious little thrills, asking.

"'Tis me—Mickey," he replied.

"Come right up," said the voice, and the latch of the inner vestibule door began its clicking invitation.

Doolin pushed it open, stepped into the warm hall, and began the ascent of the three flights of stairs—the stairs which heretofore he had always taken in great springing bounds in his eagerness to get up to Annie Breen; but tonight he went slowly, sedately. His steps were lagging, and his shoulders, despite that vigorous squaring he had given them when he first stepped into the vestibule, were sagging again. Moreover, the farther he went up the stairs the more drooping the shoulders became. At the top of the second flight Doolin's bearing suggested that of a man who was marching to the death chair.

Indeed, at the moment, Doolin felt he could closely approximate the feelings of such an unfortunate individual, for he had a feeling that he was about to face the end of all things; that the bottom had dropped out of the world and that life would be in the future in nowise the desirable thing it had been to his healthy young self in the past.

In his inner pocket was a note—a

very brief note, from Annie Breen. It had come only yesterday, together with the small diamond ring which had signified to Doolin the greatest happiness which could come to the lot of any mortal in this vale of tears.

MICKEY, DEAR:

Come Thursday evening at seven, and
I'll tell you why. ANNIE.

This was all the note said. But it was quite enough, considering the fact that the little diamond ring reposed beside it in his pocket, to fill Doolin with the worst and most torturing of premonitions.

Was it Denny Shea, the actor in the stock company, or that fearfully good-looking and fascinating Mr. Carberry, the city editor of one of the papers, who had succeeded him in Annie's affections? Doolin shivered as he thought of his own big hulk, his ungainly ways, his stupid, stammering tongue. He might have known that such as he could never hope to hold the affections of a girl like Annie Breen!

Blindly he groped his way up that last flight of stairs, and saw Annie, trim and flushing as ever, awaiting him there on the threshold; he stammered a thick and conventional good-evening to her, got out of his big coat somehow, hung it on its usual hook in the hall, and followed Annie into the ornate little parlor of the flat, where he collapsed heavily and hopelessly into a red-plush base-rocker, and wiped his forehead absently.

"Well?" he managed to gurgle at length. He realized that this was a most abrupt and tactless beginning, but some-

how at the moment he was capable of just that one word and no more.

"You—you got the ring and my note?" asked Annie.

"Yep, I got them," said Doolin, and the brief sentence gave no hint of the turmoil that was going on within him.

"And you've come, of course, for the explanation I promised to give you?" she went on.

Doolin nodded miserably and gulped a couple of times.

"If you think there's any need of it," said he.

Annie walked slowly over to the old square piano in one corner, opened the cover, adjusted the stool with great care, ran her left hand through her wavy hair and struck a few soft-pedaled notes! Then she began to sing, in a thin, quavering, but not wholly unpleasant voice.

Doolin, with his hands clenched tight, his head bent and a look of unutterable misery upon his face, listened to the three short verses of the little song. So engrossed was he in his own bitter thoughts that he gave the rendition of the song but little heed. It was only when it was finished and Annie had swung about on the piano stool that he looked up.

"That's the reason, dear," she said softly, but not without a certain hint of pride and renunciation.

Doolin stared. "Sing it again, Annie," he advised. "I dunno as I quite caught the meanin' of them words enough to grasp 'em."

"Oh, the words have nothing to do with it," said she with heightened color.

Doolin merely stared harder.

"It's my voice, Mickey," she explained. "I've got a wonderful voice, so I'm told. I'll be a great *prima donna*, if I work and study hard enough. My voice is a gift that I must develop. It belongs to the whole world, who will some day crowd the opera houses to hear it. And so—"

Doolin sat up, a great joy and a great relief in his eyes.

"Then there aint some other guy that's cut me out?" he asked with an eagerness that was almost childish.

"Mickey, dear, if there was any man

in the world for me, it would be you—and you only," said the girl. "But I shall never marry. I shall give my life and my whole time to my music."

Doolin strove to repress the overwelling joy in his heart and the strident desire he felt at that moment to bellow his exuberance at the top of his voice.

"Sing me something else, will you, Annie?" he asked very quietly.

Annie sang again, and then at his request, yet again and again. Doolin, sitting back in his base-rocker, listened closely, and watched her with shrewd, speculative eyes.

At nine o'clock he arose, said his adieu and got into his big overcoat. In the hall he said a last good-by quite calmly, with never a hint of tragedy about it, which, truth to tell, rather disappointed Annie Breen. But once down the stairs and on the snowy street, Doolin began to think things over.

"'Tis plain to see some of these blood-suckin' music teachers has got a grip on Annie," he told himself flatly. "Whoever it is, is stringin' her on and soft-soapin' her about her voice just for the money he's gettin' out of her. Sing in op'ry, hey? Well, well now! 'Tis not for me to say Annie hasn't any voice. Sure she has the nice little parly voice to sing wit'—when there's a lot of applaudin' friends round her that overlooks the notes she misses by half a mile or so, and all the times her voice cracks when she strains it after some of the high ones. But Annie singin' in public—nay, nay! 'Twould sure be the hook for hers.

"I wonder who the gink is that's stringin' her this way. 'Tis a shame to deceive a girl like that. The cruel disappointment it will be to her when she learns the truth! I'll find out about him."

Five minutes later Doolin had rung the bell of a little white cottage on a neighboring street, and was holding confidential converse at the front door with Rose Conlin, Annie Breen's favorite cousin.

"Ye'll not breathe a word of what I've been askin' you, to Annie, will yer?" he said.

"Never a word of it," Rose promised.

"Now let's make sure I've got it straight—Professor Anazetti, 368 Kelton St. Is that right, now?"

"That's the place and the man, Mickey," said Rose.

"Good-night, then, and a thousand times obliged to you I am, Rose," said he.

"And in the mornin' I'll drop round on this Professor Anazetti," he told himself as he walked down the street, "and knock the block off of him for the lies he's been stringin' Annie wit', and make him tell her the truth about that voice of hers. Sure, 'twill be a fearful shock to the poor girl; but 'tis all for the best in the end. And me thinkin' some one had cut me out wit' her! Wot do yer know about that?"

At ten o'clock next morning, quite as he had promised himself, Doolin rang the bell of number 368 Kelton Street, asked the frowsy woman who opened the door for Professor Anazetti, was ushered into what in its better days had been the front parlor of the house and was now evidently the professor's studio, and sat down in an ornate leather chair, twirling his hat and picturing the wreck he would make of this place before he left it. The light in his eyes at that moment boded no particular good for Professor Anazetti, could that gentleman have seen them.

But Professor Anazetti, in the room just beyond, hustling out of a stained and greasy dressing-gown and into a very spruce and smartly cut frock coat, knew nothing of the fate awaiting him in the next room. Therefore he came in very breezily, a brisk, dapper little man, with a freckled face, an upturned nose and a pair of close-set, penetrating little eyes.

Doolin, glancing up at him, concluded that the professor's branch of the Anazetti family had had its origin not over a thousand miles from Dublin.

The professor stepped nimbly across the room and before the slower-moving and less facile minded Doolin could utter a word, the professor was talking rapidly.

"You wish lessons of me, of course," he rattled off. "Splendid chest you have

there—wonderful, indeed. I like that big throat of yours, too. There are possibilities in it. But most important of all is the mouth, its roof and its arch. Let me see them."

Before Doolin could remonstrate, the professor had him over to the window, had yanked open his mouth and was inspecting it with sundry little exclamations intended to show his surprise, his wonder and his unbounded delight at the discovery of a veritable paragon.

"Such a mouth, such an arch!" gurgled the professor. "Man, dear, do you realize that you have the making of one of the greatest *bassos* in the world. With me you will go far—there is no limit to your possibilities. I would rather see a throat and mouth like yours than to discover the richest goldmine ever opened."

He flitted over to the piano and struck a note.

"Try that," he commanded.

A sudden inspiration came to Doolin. He chuckled softly to himself.

"The very thing," said he mentally. "Nix on the rough stuff I'd planned. What could be better? Sure, I'll shoot him wit' his own guns."

"Try it, try it! Let me hear your voice, man!" the professor was exhorting impatiently.

Doolin opened his mouth and let forth a mighty volume of sound. At that hoarse, full-throated bray, the ornate vases on the mantelpiece fairly rocked, and the globes on the chandelier shivered.

"Excellent, excellent! Wonderful!" piped the professor, rubbing his thin hands together ecstatically. "A trifle off tone, it is true. But that is nothing, nothing! What counts is the roof of the mouth, the lungs, the *timbre* of the voice. The rest I can teach you. Nature has endowed you wonderfully. Now try this note!"

There ensued a quarter hour of note-trying that must have made the neighbors suspicious of some fearful tragedy being enacted in their midst.

At the end of it, the professor was even more ecstatic in his praises. "And when can you begin?" he asked. "What days can you come to me?"

Doolin reflected; Rose had told him that Annie took her lessons Tuesdays and Fridays at four in the afternoon.

"How would Tuesday and Friday each week be?" he asked, evidently convinced by the professor's absurd rantings.

"Very good!"

"Say—er—at half-past three."

"Good, again. I have a pupil those days at four. That will give you a half-hour each of those days," said the professor. "Now as to the prices."

His little eyes narrowed craftily and greedily.

"My regular prices are ten dollars for each lesson. With you and that wonderful voice there shall be a big discount. The rest I will get in the advertising I will receive when you are hailed as the greatest De Rezke of the age and it is known that you are a pupil of mine. Your lessons shall be—tell no one of this—but seven dollars each; two lessons to be paid for now in advance."

Doolin, without a word, counted out fourteen dollars and took a receipt for them.

"To-day is Friday. This afternoon at three-thirty, then, for your first lesson," said he, bowing Doolin out with the true grand manner.

Just before four that afternoon Doolin, in the midst of roaring, bel-lowed scales, heard the front door open, and Annie Breen's voice inquiring for the professor. With a grim smile he heard her ushered into the tiny reception-room just across the hall to await her turn.

Presently the lesson was finished; the clock struck four; Doolin listened modestly to the professor's exuberant praises, and donned his coat and hat.

Passing that little reception-room he paused, looked in, then started back in the most well-simulated surprise and wonder. Annie, too, jumped to her feet.

"You?" she cried in unbelief.

"Me for sure," chuckled Doolin. "I've just discovered I have a voice, Annie. I'm goin' to give up teamin' contractin' and develop it. I'm goin' to be the greatest *basso* in all the world. Professor Anazetti says so, and of

course he knows. Listen to the wonderful voice of me."

He took a full breath.

"Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hee!" sang Doolin, running up a frightful and ear-splitting scale, which fairly shook the panes in the grimy windows.

"Hee-hee-hee-hee-hee-hee-hoo-o-o!" he came down again, for all the world like a bale of cotton dropped off an elevator at about, say, the sixth story.

"Aint it a peach—wot?" he asked soberly. "Aint the professor got it sized up just about right? Gettin' my lessons for seven dollars a half-hour instead of ten, too, just because of the advertisin' I'll be givin' him as his pupil, when I have all the other what-you-call-ems shoved back to the bush!"

Annie was staring at him hard; her face went very red; then it suddenly grew white.

Then she looked at him very bravely. "Mickey, I'm on," she said steadily. "Take me away from this place."

For some time, as they went down the street, they walked along in silence.

At last, glancing at her, he saw her shoulders trembling suspiciously. Instantly he caught her hand in his.

"Yer cryin', Annie!" he said in genuine alarm. "Aw, don't do that. Gee, but I'm the big brute. That was an awful raw way of doin' it. I'd oughter thought up some other way that wouldn't 'a' hurt you so much."

"I—I—aint cryin' because I'm hurt," she choked. "I'm cryin' because I'm glad and mad. Glad that you've brought me to my senses, Mickey dear, and mad when I think of all the nonsense I swallowed from that man back there."

He drew her arm through his.

"Us for Basil's place and the eats. You'll feel better after a bit of tea, dearie," he said very gently.

At the little white table in one corner of Basil's, Annie suddenly whipped off her left glove.

"Mickey," she almost whispered, tentatively pushing the hand across the snowy cloth towards him, "have—have you got it with you? You have? Oh, good! Please put it back, will you? That finger feels awful strange and lonesome without it."



Latest Adventures of a Diplomatic Free Lance

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

THE GREAT GAME of international diplomacy has many exciting crises. Few of them, however, have been of more intense interest or more world-wide importance than the dramatic situation described in this story. Those "in the know" will realize that the affair may indeed have happened—will probably hazard a shrewd guess that it actually DID happen!

No. II—THE AFFAIR AT SPITHEAD

THE Thames Embankment in the neighborhood of Waterloo Bridge presents a nightly object-lesson in contrasts; it is doubtful if in all London there is a spot where extremes in the social fabric come together so frequently or upon such a footing of equality. For, observe: at the back of the Gardens, a stone's throw from the River, are the great Hotel Cecil,—its restaurants and banqueting rooms filled with representative gatherings of the aristocracy,—the Savoy Hotel, Terry's and the Savoy Theatres, Adelphi Terrace, The Savage Club. Back of them is the Strand, with its hotels, theatres and seething current of metropolitan life. And, along the Embankment—the mixture! Upper, lower and middle

class—the gilding and the dregs. The one, strolling down through the Gardens, from brilliantly lighted and lavishly furnished salons, from the atmosphere of music, perfume and the rustling of satin, from tables groaning with epicurean dainties—and the other, crawling up from the River-landings, seeping in through side-street and alley, staying an empty stomach by the tightening of a belt, sharpening an appetite upon stray whiffs from the hotel kitchens, flaunting the reproach of its filth and rags in the face of dinner-coat and velvet gown.

A man who leaned upon the wall of the Embankment one foggy night was amusing himself by observing this contrast in its drifting current of humani-

ty. Now and then, the yellow mist lifted sufficiently for him to make out luminous blurs above the Gardens, which came, as he knew, from windows in the Cecil and Savoy. At such moments, he could distinguish ghostly figures against the Embankment lights perhaps a hundred feet away. Then there would be increasing opacity—until he could not have been sure of another person at arm's-length. He had drifted through Wellington Street, along the end of Somerset House, from the Strand—unconscious of the fact that he'd been quietly followed by a thick-set figure in mackintosh and Fedora hat from the time he paused before the show-window of a popular photographer. And the mysterious shadow was equally unconscious that a young woman—escorted by a distinguished-looking foreigner in dinner-clothes and top-hat—had noticed his sudden interest in the stranger and was, in turn, following *him*. So it came about that when the stranger leaned upon the Embankment wall to watch the curious silhouettes in the fog, his bulky shadow did likewise, a few paces further along—while the young woman and her foreigner stopped by one of the trees, where they were practically invisible. Presently the mackintoshed figure yawned, stretched his arms and took a few hesitating steps toward the stranger—drawing a cigar-case from his pocket as he came.

"Pardon, sir—you haf matches, berhaps—yess?"

"Why, let me see. I *had*, the last time I—" He drew from his pocket a familiar wooden box with its Swedish label. "I guess there must be half a dozen left. Help yourself."

"Thank you, mooch. And you, sir—try one of my cigars if you please. T'ey are not too strong—und also t'ey are goot."

"Why, that seems hardly a fair exchange. You're very good, I'm sure! Thanks." As the match flared up between them each pair of eyes took stock of the other face, but the German's hat-brim and upturned collar gave him the advantage—a suggestion of black beard and fat nose was all the stranger saw, while his own clean-cut though

unshaven face was revealed with the sharpness of a flash-light photograph.

"You are a strancher in Lonton—yess? Berhaps an American—so?"

"Not altogether a stranger—I've been here before. But I'm an American, all right—I don't belong this side of the water. You're no Englishman, either, I guess. German—aren't you?"

"I wass porn in East Brussia—put I am now gosmopolitan. Pardon, again—your face, it iss familiar to me, I think—yess. Maype we haf nodt met pefore, put you I haf seen—some-where. *Ach!* You wass at der window of the photographer in der Strandt a few moments ago—yess? I bass py when you look at the pig bicture of Lordt Trevor—der famous Lordt Trevor—so?"

"Who? Nope, either you've got me twisted up with some one else, or you didn't see what picture I was looking at. Whereabouts was it?"

"Der pig photographers—'Melliott undt Pry.' That bicture wass enlarged photocraph in carved frame of weat'-ered oak. Die man wass in gray *morgen*-suit, wit' gray beaver Alpine hat und white gaiters—gray suède glofes undt silk tie wit' a pear-shape bearl in it—yess? That wass the man? Undt t'at man wass der famous Lordt Trevor." The words "Not on your life!" were on the tip of the stranger's tongue, but some instinct choked them back.

"Well, you probably know the people in this village a good deal better than I do. That about fits *one* of the pictures I was looking at—fine-looking chap, I thought. What's he famous about?"

"Oh, everyt'ing w'ich happens outdoors. He heldt der recordt for distance undt altitude mit aëroplane, last year. He iss one of der pest bolo-blayers in Europe. He shoots tikers on foot—*undt* lions—*undt* elephants. T'ey say he is one of der four wealt'iest Beers in England—undt he iss der intimate friendt of half der growned headts, ingluding der Kaiser *undt* King Chorge."

"Parliament man?"

"*Nein—nein!* T'at he most certainly iss nodt! He hass not'ing to do wit' bolitics. I peliefe, in his young-man

days, he wass Deputy Gommissioner in Indtia, or somet'ings like t'at—but he hass nodd'ing to do wit' bolitics since he gomes home to Englandt."

"When did he come home from India?"

"Some years ago. I couldt nodd say how long."

"Say, are you dead sure you saw his picture in that window? It's a pretty foggy night, you know."

"*Ach!* I am bositif! Der arc-light wass shust there at der curb, when I bass you. Look you, *mein* friendt—haf you by chance any spordting bloodt?"

"M-well—some. Used to have, anyhow."

"Fery goodt. You t'ink I am mistaken. I will mit you make der wacher—der pet, as you say in America. I will pet you fife poundts t'at der man whose bicture you look at so glose is Lordt Trevor, of Dartmoor!"

"Hmph! As I've less than five shillings in my clothes, it kinda sounds like a safe bet. How would you prove it, anyway?"

"Fery easy, *mein* friendt—fery easy. I gif you my cardt—here it iss. 'August Pfaff—Colonel August Pfaff,' at your serfice. You shall gall for me tomorrow afternoon at St. Chames's Club, undt lunch mit me. Lordt Trevor iss often t'ere for lunch. If nodd' we find by telephone yust where he iss, undt we gall at t'at club undt sendt in our cardts. Undt w'en he gomes, I shall introduce you. You say you haf nodd so mooch money—fery goot. I will gift you long oddts—I will pet der fife boundts against fife *pence*. Undt all you will do to win dot pet iss yust to say der man I introduce iss nodd der same man whose bicture you look at in der Strandt, t'is efening. Gome now—dot iss sborting broposition, *hein?*"

"Say, mister—I beg pardon—'Colonel,' I don't believe you looked very closely at this suit I'm wearing. Give you my word, if I'm admitted to any club, the pages'll tip off the house-detective to watch me. I've slept in them several nights, you know—and they've seen a lot of wear, besides."

"Will you bermit me to offer a loan of ten boundts?"

"Say—look here, Colonel—what's your object in all this? It's just possible I'm not altogether the fool I look, you know. Why are you so bent upon my seeing this Lord Trevor? Me—a total stranger—a mere passing visitor in London whom you know nothing about?"

"My friendt, I will pe quite open mit you. Dot Lordt Trevor iss one celebrated man. For him, I haf der utmost respect undt friendtship. Put beoples haf saidt t'at he haf a touble—*double*, as you say. Beoples haf saidt so more as once—undt t'at der likeness iss most wonterful. His Lordtship haf expressed great interest in dot touble of his—undt he half offered a hundredt boundts rewardt to anyone who will tell him somet'ings aut'entic apoud dot other man who iss so mooch like him. Me—I am well-agwainted mit His Lordtship. *You* are, I t'ink, bossiply agwainted mit dot *other* man. Well—I risk der fife-boundt pet, undt der ten boundt loan, to win der hundtredt boundts rewardt. Dot iss berfectly gomprehensible spordting broposition, iss it nodd? Now—will you oplige me py accepting dot loan of ten boundts, undt dot pet of fife boundts?"

"Thank you—no. I don't know where in God's world I could rake up the ten pounds to pay you back."

"Will you bermit me to obtain for you embloyment? Of a respectable nature?"

"Well, that's something more like! I appreciate that offer, Colonel. I suppose you're making it with the same object in view—that I'll lunch with you and meet Lord Trevor when I've earned a suit of decent clothes? In fact, if I accepted your offer, I reckon that would be the string to it—though you are courteous enough to keep it out of sight. You people over here go a little further to place a gambling proposition than we do, I think—don't believe we'd go to all that trouble with a stranger. Tell you what I'll do: I need employment, need it pretty badly. If it were daylight, you'd get that impression. But I want to chew over this a bit. You see, I'm an independent cuss and I'd like to chance one expiring struggle to get a job of my own before I take you

up. If there's nothing doing, and I'm still in London, I'll meet you here Monday afternoon—when 'Big Ben,' over yonder in the Parliament Tower, says three o'clock. That's about as far as I care to go, just now."

The Colonel seemed to be considering for a moment or two before he answered. He'd learned in a long and quite eventful career to read the tones in a man's voice as well as his features—and he knew finality when he heard it. After all, it should not be difficult to follow this man without his knowledge.

"Fery goot, my friendt—fery goot! You will findt me here at three of the clock, on Wednesday. *Undt*, shouldt you wish to see me pefore, I go to St. Chames's Club for my gorrespondence aboutt elefen in der *morgen*. You gannot miss me if you are outside of der Club for one or two *morgens*. *Gute nacht*, sir—your name you haf not gif me, put it makes no difference. You will tell me, perhaps, when we meet again. *Gute nacht*."

As the Colonel disappeared in the fog, the man started impulsively to call out his name—it seemed a poor return of the other's courtesy to withhold it—and yet, some instinct warned him that the Colonel was determined to pump from him, in one way or another, some information which he considered valuable. The statement that Lord Trevor—if, indeed, such a person existed—wished to discover the identity of some one who closely resembled him, sounded plausible enough, until he remembered a certain hesitant tone in the Colonel's voice—the tone of a man who invents a story as he tells it, and waits an instant, here and there, for his imagination to catch up with him. Suppose this Colonel August Pfaff was not the friend of His Lordship he professed. The stranger indistinctly remembered hearing of such a personage as Lord Trevor—very much the sort of man Pfaff had described him. He was a judge of faces—this stranger—and if the photograph had been really that of His Lordship, why His Lordship was the sort of gentleman every person devoutly wishes for a friend—not in the least the sort of character

which hides itself behind a beard and a turned-down hat-brim. For one thing, the Colonel was too inquisitive about the identity of a certain man whom the stranger had once known—and loved. There had been many people of various breeds who had concerned themselves with that man's identity in the past. If he were still living, they might exhibit a very absorbing interest in his movements, to-day. And if the Colonel really had the same person in mind, he wouldn't be likely to—eh? Go off about his business and trust to the stranger's meeting him at three o'clock on Monday? Not in a thousand years! The Colonel was probably waiting—just out of sight in the fog—to dog him all night. He'd no idea of letting the American slip away.

An instant later, a person who happened to be watching would have rubbed his eyes in surprise. The place where the stranger had leaned over the parapet was vacant—he had disappeared as completely as if he'd dropped into the river without a splash. The girl and the foreigner, edging a few steps nearer, caught a vanishing glimpse of him as he slipped to the ground. In an instant, the foreigner was after him—wriggling along on hands and knees, regardless of his dinner-clothes. The girl remained where she was.

In about five minutes, a ghostly figure slipped up to her in the fog and whispered:

"The man is no fool! Across the drive, he crawled—like a cat—and returned again to the wall *beyond* the Colonel—who will come *this way* in his search. He will follow the wall to Charing Cross—that man—but it is written that we shall find him. He has something on his mind—and he whispers—to the River."

Catching his arm, the girl started rapidly along toward Charing Cross Bridge—when the fog thickened, they ran. And in a few moments—keeping between the trees and the wall—they passed the figure of a man with his elbows upon the parapet, looking into the yellow mist which hung over the River. They would have failed to recognize him had it not been for the lights of a "four-penny steamboat" which

swung in close to the embankment, just below the man's face, as she left Charing Cross pier—but, congratulating themselves upon their luck, they stopped just beyond him in the fog at a moment when the electric light at that point sputtered and went out.

The man was satisfied that he'd outwitted the inquisitive Colonel, but he was keeping a wary eye out for the dim figures of passing men. He noticed the shadows of the girl and her foreigner—but, when they stopped close together under the leafless trees, he took them for a pair of lovers and didn't trouble himself as to whether they remained or moved on.

His mind was busy with an insistent problem. Suppose, now, one finds himself in London with a hundred dollars of American money and the hope of finding respectable employment?—manual labor not barred, but deferred, as a last resort. Not a friend in the whole vast city, excepting a few traveling acquaintances upon whom he hasn't the slightest claim when it comes to asking favors. Suppose, while sound asleep in respectable but inexpensive lodgings, his room has been entered and his money stolen after he has been chloroformed? Suppose the contents of his portmanteau have been left with the landlady as equivalent for what he owes—and that, in several days, he's had but three full meals? Suppose he has walked himself lame in the effort to procure employment—and has in his pocket but "one-and-six-pence?" Question: what is likely to happen when he's eaten up the "one-and-six-pence?" Once, he'd been an ensign in the United States navy. Well—that was past and gone. A dozen times that day he'd found it difficult to enumerate his qualifications as a wage-earner. He'd applied to some of the steamship owners in the hope of getting a third or fourth mate's billet—but he found a Board of Trade certificate necessary, and it had been intimated that his resignation from the American navy looked rather fishy. He'd thought of taking the Board of Trade examination without further waste of time—but there would be certain fees, red tape, delays, disinclination to pass him anyway, because of

that same resignation. One might seek advice from the American ambassador—or assistance from the London charitable institutions—true. But—well—the outlook meant privation, drudgery for years, if not for life, in an alien land. Again, there was the matter of that man he'd known—and loved—in the old days. Evidently, there were people on his track. For what? Hmph! If his friend's activities were of a similar nature to those in former years, he could guess *that* answer. Suppose this "Pfaff" tracked him down—got him foul—tried "third-degree" or worse, to make him talk? How could he be sure that some word might not escape him that would jeopardize that friend's life? Looking at the situation all around, he appeared to be a rather useless proposition. An older man would have fought through the tangle somehow until a loophole appeared, but young blood throws life away with superb prodigality. In the first stunned consciousness of overwhelming defeat, the game doesn't seem worth while.

He tossed the lighted butt of the Colonel's cigar into the river. Unconsciously, he'd been holding a folded paper in his hand—one it had touched, at his feet, when he dropped out of sight and wriggled away in the fog. He hadn't the faintest idea what it might be—possibly some document of Pfaff's which had slipped from his pocket when he reached for his card-case. Anyhow, the stranger was thinking of something else, just then—and stowed it, absent-mindedly, inside his coat.

He took off his hat and examined it. Good, serviceable hat for somebody—no use wasting it. He was about to lay it upon the parapet when an afterthought led him to replace it on his head. He'd all the American distaste for having some disreputable waif fall heir to his personal belongings. He glanced up and down the embankment—the fog had thickened again, and he could see no one. Placing one hand upon the parapet, he vaulted across it and dropped into the river—ten feet below.

Had he looked behind him, he must have seen the dim outlines of the girl and the foreigner—they were barely six

feet away and, from the momentary placing of his hat upon the wall, they knew instinctively what he had in mind. Scarcely had he touched the water when the foreigner—slipping out of his top-coat and opera-hat, which he thrust into the girl's hands—sprang lightly upon the stone parapet and dived after him. As he disappeared, the girl caught a muttered exclamation: "Up river comes the tide—to Charing Cross pier will Abdool swim—wait there!"

The girl was leaning over the wall as he dived from it—and it seemed an hour before she heard a faint splashing, as of men struggling in the river. Walking up the Embankment to the landing-float at Charing Cross pier—avoiding those who loomed up before her in the fog—she slipped around to the front of it unhindered. Then, after several moments of suspense, she made out the long, even strokes of a powerful swimmer; presently a man's head appeared in the water just below her.

"Did you get him, Abdool?"

"Aie—but the man fought that he might die—it was needful to choke him. He knows nothing—and has swallowed much water."

There was a coil of old rope at the back of the float. Making this fast around the man's body, the foreigner climbed up—and with the girl's assistance, he managed to haul the unconscious form out of the water. Thinking his condition too serious for delay, they rolled him over on his face—drained the water from his lungs and produced artificial respiration until the heart began to act again. Then the girl found a taxicab in Northumberland Avenue and returned to the boat-landing, where they put the still unconscious man in it and drove off through the fog toward Park Lane. The landing pier had been deserted. Except for the few passers along the Embankment—who thought it merely a case of intoxication—no one had observed anything of the affair.

When the stranger awoke next morning, he supposed himself delirious. He was lying in a sunny bed-room, furnished in exquisite taste. Through broad Jacobean windows, he saw a mass of leafless branches in what seemed an extensive park. He'd

known fever of all breeds—from "yellow jack" to East Indian "dengue"—but he could recall nothing like this in previous high temperatures. His skin didn't feel hot to the touch, at all—it was delightfully cool. And there was a fragrant odor of coffee in his nostrils—also a new experience. He lifted himself a bit upon his elbow and discovered by his bedside a small table—upon which a percolator was steaming over its spirit-lamp—accompanied by toast, biscuits, cigarets and a pony box of cigars. Decidedly, his physician allowed him unusual privileges for a sick man. He thought he'd try the good things, anyhow. And the flavor seemed quite realistic—for a dream.

While he was trying to convince himself that it wasn't hallucination, an Afghan—in the striking uniform of a *Rissaldar* in the Indian army—came softly into the room. That settled it! He was confident the next apparitions would be pink gorillas and green boa-constrictors. This was the most spectacular attack he'd ever had. The Afghan, however—smiling at the empty coffee-cup and litter of crumbs—appeared to be speaking in the most natural way: Had the Sahib rested well? Would he care to get up and breakfast with His Lordship—presently? The man glanced in amazement at the small clock upon a dressing-table—it was after ten. He looked wonderingly down at his pajamas; they were of pongee silk—he'd owned nothing like them since the Annapolis days. Indistinctly, he began to remember the clothes he'd worn upon the previous day. There was a neat gray morning-suit in the open wardrobe at his left, and it seemed about his size—but he'd no recollection of it. Stepping noiselessly across the room to a door at the further side, the Afghan turned a valve somewhere and there was a sound of water under pressure, splashing into a tub.

"The Sahib likes his bath cool? But not too cold? It will be ready in a moment. Achmet will then shave the Sahib—and take him down to His Lordship."

The man simply couldn't puzzle it out; he gave up trying. There would be

an explanation somewhere, presently. The bath was delicious, and the shave, a luxurious one. He couldn't account for the fit of his new clothes—which was surprisingly good, considering their purchase that morning, from his measurements, in a Regent Street shop. Altogether, he was considerably dazed as he followed the Afghan down the broad stairway. In the lower hall, they walked along to the door of a sunny room with a south-eastern exposure. A beautifully appointed table was laid near a large bay-window; there was a great Dutch fire-place with glowing logs upon its andirons, at one side—and at the table, sat a beautiful girl of perhaps twenty and a handsome man in the forties. As the stranger caught a glimpse of this gentleman's face in the light from the window, he stopped short in the middle of the room. His heels clicked together, he straightened up, with fingers touching his temple in the navy salute.

"Come aboard, sir!"

The man at the table rose, instinctively returning the salute—but it was more as an officer of high rank, or a yacht owner, acknowledges it, the motion a little short of its full sweep, than a Naval Commander in active service.

"Ah! Good morning, sir. I trust you're feeling quite yourself again? Permit me—this is my ward, Miss Tremaine. Sit down, and let us see how your appetite is this morning."

"Thank you, sir. You—you're very kind. You—you do not seem to remember me, sir?"

"My dear chap—I trust you'll pardon me for that. One meets such a lot of people, don't you know. Cawn't seem to place you at this moment—but—eh, what?"

"I was formerly Ensign Walter Bradley, sir, of the United States scout cruiser *Nauset*—we were on special service details, you know, sir. In fact, the *Nauset* doesn't appear on the Navy Register." The American's mind was strangely confused. He would have staked his life that he knew this genial, friendly man—had known him under circumstances which made it impossible that he should forget a tone of his voice or an expression in his face. And yet,

here was a person who seemed unquestionably a peer of England—a man who spoke unconsciously with the lazy drawl of a London clubman who affects eccentricity in his mannerisms. Moreover, the beautiful house, with its spacious grounds in the most desirable part of the city, represented the investment of a considerable fortune in itself—and the charming young girl who smiled at him across the table must be what he had described her, his thoroughly English ward. All the facts seemed to indicate a most amazing case of personal resemblance, but some instinct of Bradley's refused to accept that explanation, though the Viscount's manner and conversation bore it out in every detail.

"Ah? Then I presume you may have called upon me aboard my yacht, the *Ranee Sylvia*, upon some occasion when the *Nauset* was in the same harbor, Mr. Bradley. Or, possibly we may have met at the British Embassy in Washington—I've been a guest of our Ambassador, there—twice."

It suddenly flashed through Bradley's mind that Colonel Pfaff's inquisitiveness and this resemblance to his former commander had a direct connection. If such were the case, this *de facto* peer would not betray himself even to an old and trusted friend—it might jeopardize his life to do so. Very good. They'd served the United States government together in former days—and, with such a reason back of it, His Lordship's failure to recognize him couldn't be taken as a personal slight. To one who'd played a minor part in the big Game, as Bradley had, this realization was sufficient—he was content to begin a new friendship as a stranger if His Lordship's attitude favored such a course. He was really by no means clear as to where he stood in the scheme of existence, or what the future held for him. Last night, he had considered his life closed, irrevocably. This morning, to his amazement, he still lived—he was presentably clothed—he was eating a most palatable meal in most congenial company. Afterward—what? He realized with a touch of self-contempt that he really didn't care—so greatly does a full stomach alter one's outlook upon life. Actually, he had seated himself at

the table with them and was taking his part in the conversation as if it were an every-day occurrence.

"Very likely your suggestion explains it, sir. I saw your face against the light as I came into the room, and thought for a moment you were a commanding officer under whom I formerly served—to whom I was very much attached. Of course, I see now that I was mistaken. Would you—er—mind humoring my curiosity as to how I came to be in your house this morning—when we are really strangers? My last recollection is of the Victoria Embankment—in a thick fog."

"Why—er—I fawncy Miss Tremaine an' our friend, Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan, were responsible for that, don't you know. They'd been dinin' at the Cecil with the Maharajah of Kutiala; awfterward, Miss Tremaine fawncied she'd like to walk along the Strand an' down to the Embankm't in the fog. They'd sent the limousine home an' stopped to look at a recent likeness of me in Melliot an' Pry's window. You were standin' there too, don't you know—lookin' as if you'd some pers'nal int'rest in the picture. An' when you moved on, they noticed a bounder by the name of Pfaff, followin' you. So they tagged awfter the fellow to see what he was up to. He bears none too good a reputation—I fawncy a word from me would get him expelled from any club, if I cared to meddle. Well, they overheard the talk between you—all a mess of prevarication upon that bounder's part, you know, because I'm not aware that I've a double, anywhere, an' I never offered a hundred pounds reward, don't you know, for any such ridiculous purpose. The bounder had some questionable object in quizzin' you as he did—an' when he said good-night, they were quite sure he'd follow when you moved on. Then the Khan saw you drop to the ground an' disappear. He's done his bit of scoutin' in Afghanistan, y'know—an he was awfter you like a shot—not from any impertin'nt motive, but just in case Pfaff saw how you went, an' meant mischief. You fooled the man famously. Miss Tremaine an' the Khan walked along to where you were standin', later, an' waited to see if Pfaff

would show up. They saw you lean over the wall an' lose your balance. The Khan was awfter you, directly—swam back to Charing Cross—an' the two of them managed to get you into a taxi—unconscious. Fetched you along home, don't y'know—naturally—nothin' else to do. The Khan's lived with us for several years. Have you any conjecture, by the way, as to what Pfaff had in mind concernin' you? He speaks better English than I do when he chooses, but they tell me his German accent was something grotesque. Rawther odd proceedin' all 'round, don't you know—what?"

"That's what struck me at the time. The man was plausible enough too—in a way. You people go out of your way a lot for a sporting proposition—I might have swallowed his yarn if it hadn't been for the sort of experience I had on special details in the navy. The more he talked, the more I felt that he wasn't altogether the friend of yours he claimed to be—wanted to get some line on you if he could. I assume that I'm talking to Lord Trevor, by the way? That was the name he gave the picture I was looking at—and you certainly posed for it." (His Lordship bowed, smilingly.) "You see, when he sprung his first remark on me, I was a little off my guard—denied that I'd been looking at *Lord Trevor's* picture, as far as I was aware, being merely a visitor in London and having no acquaintance here. I thought at the moment that I wiggled out of it, for I made no other admission, but I'm not at all sure he was convinced. In fact, I've a strong impression he was not—particularly, if he attempted to follow me and got fooled."

"An' you put yourself to some trouble, Mr. Bradley—should one say 'Leftenant,' or 'Commander,' by the way?—so the man should get nothin' out of you which might cause me annoyance—when I was a stranger to you! It's a bit diffic'lt to conjecture what such a person could pawssibly ascertain which might prove harmful or annoyin'—but his attempt to do so was most impertinent—presumin', don't y'know. An' your dishin' him so cleverly puts me under obligations which I must discharge as far as one may. It will be

conferrin' a favor upon me, Lieutenant, if you'll suggest something I may do for you. Are you 'on leave,' at present?"

"Permanent leave, sir. I resigned from the navy two years ago, and invested a few inherited thousands with an old school friend—in business."

"So much the better. I can give you rawther valuable introductions."

"You're very kind, sir—but—well—I think you are entitled to frankness on my part. Our business was only a moderate success; my partner was too impatient for large profits. We didn't actually run behind, but it was pretty slow—and he disappeared about four months ago. Our balance at the bank disappeared about the same time. We were doing a commission business—there was no stock. Cleaned me out, down to a couple of hundred dollars. I've no immediate relatives. London always had a fascination for me—so I came over here to make a fresh start. Had about a hundred left—but that was stolen at my lodgings, one night. I'm 'up against it,' as we say in the States. If you can suggest anything in the way of decent employment, I'll appreciate it very much—but I must feel that I'm really earning the money, you know."

"I fawncy there'll be no diffic'ly about that, Mr. Bradley. With your navy trainin', I'd offer you the berth of navigatin' officer on my yacht—the berth is worth five hundred pounds a year whether I'm cruisin' or not. But I fawncy I can do better than that, for you. However, there's no immediate hurry about startin', is there? You'll be my guest until I've time to arrange the matter? Tut, tut, man! You placed me under obligations, lawst evenin'. I'm sure you'll not be churlish about acceptin' a slight courtesy in return. You must excuse me now for a bit—I've an appointm't at Buckingham'm. But I'll leave you with Nan—she'll jolly well look awfter you—no fear!" As Lord Trevor left the room, Bradley glanced across the table and found the girl smiling upon him in a very friendly way—friendly, and—something else. There was that in her mischievous eyes which seemed to penetrate even his thoughts.

"Mr. Bradley, I think you deserve a compliment. But you'll get it only on condition that you're more frank with me than you were with Guardy. You see I know—even better than Colonel Pfaff—how positive you were in your recognition of the man whose picture you saw. Tell me, what sort of a Commander did you find him, to serve under? Was he hard on the enlisted men?"

"*Hard!* Miss Tremaine, if he'd ordered them into a blazing powder-magazine, they wouldn't have hesitated a second! No one who ever served on the *Nauset* could help loving him! The pity is that only those detailed on special service ever knew the man—he was something of a mystery throughout the navy. Every ship heard something, indirectly, but very few officers or men ever saw him. Some years ago, it was rumored that he'd been killed, but the report has never been confirmed—he's no longer in the service of the United States, anyhow."

"I judged you must think a lot of him by the way you answered Guardy this morning when you came in."

"Why? How was that?"

"When he failed to recognize you, there was no foolish persistence, as there would have been with most any man. That was your navy training, of course, but it was a pretty severe test—just as Pfaff nearly surprised you last evening—but didn't—quite. You believe at this moment, Mr. Bradley, that Guardy is your former commander, but you're as loyal a friend as I ever met. You saw he appeared to have reasons of his own for denying you—and at once offered the perfectly natural excuse of a fancied resemblance in rather trying light. It was so well done that not one person in a million would have suspected you. And yet, Guardy really *isn't* the man you take him to be. Oh, I don't expect the least betrayal of surprise at that statement, Mr. Bradley; I know your training is proof against that. But it's the fact, just the same—because when I was a wee tot in short frocks, Guardy was a Deputy Commissioner in the Madras Presidency, India—a chum of my daddy. That's why daddy made him my

guardian, before he was killed in Kabul. Daddy was an officer of the Indian Secret Service, you know—and I was raised in it."

"Then—if you'll pardon my being personal, Miss Tremaine—that accounts for the maturity which impresses me in you. In years, I should imagine you little more than a girl, but you have thinking ability and a mature comprehension that very few girls possess. Frankly, I didn't know how to take you, at first—I thought you rather precocious."

"Hmph! I wonder what you'd thought me last night, when Abdool and I were hauling you out of the river? You aren't exactly light-weight, you know! Why did you do such a thing? You've no appearance of being a coward."

"Do what? Lose my balance?"

"No. Perhaps we didn't tell Guardy all we saw. May have fancied you'd rather we'd not. Tell me—why did you?"

"Because I've the sort of pride which balks at accepting charity, I suppose. I'd had but three meals in several days and one-and-sixpence in my pocket. I'd asked for employment in forty different places—and had been refused. And I was doubtful about Pfaff: didn't know but if he cornered me, he might invent some way of making me talk about—a man I was fond of—once. Game didn't seem worth playing, I guess."

"And yet you appear to be one of the few—one of the very few—born players. I think it must be instinctive. See here, Mr. Bradley, my questions have been impertinent, have they not? Well, I'd an object in them. As I told you, I was a part of the Indian secret service almost from a baby. Guardy's circle of acquaintances is so large that it would be absurd to say he is more chummy with one class of men than another—he's known and liked all around the world. But some of the men we see quite frequently are connected with the Foreign Office—merely talking with them keeps up my interest in diplomatic affairs, though of course I've no time for anything of that sort. Guardy hasn't either, but he sometimes

mentions things he hears to his chums in Downing Street. You see what I'm getting at, do you not? It would be a simple matter for our friends to associate you with the Foreign Office in a way that would command a very comfortable income—yet leave you independent to go and come as you please. Our ambassador could obtain your navy record very easily, if we asked him. Does the idea appeal to you?"

"I suppose it would mean becoming a British subject?"

"Not in the least! Of course you couldn't honorably betray the British government to any other—even your own—from what you might learn in our service. But aside from that, there's no question of allegiance. If you gave it up and went back to the States, you would simply forget what you'd learned—that's all. And you'd learn very little that could be used against us—Downing Street is rather close-mouthed you know."

Bradley was leaning back in his chair, staring out of the window, in a pre-occupied way. The feeling of unreality was still upon his senses; he was mentally reviewing the last two years of his life. Commercialism had not been congenial to him when he left the Navy; he missed the professional man's higher standard of right and wrong. His nerves had been kept on edge by the anxieties of his new venture, for which he was in no way fitted. And since the crash—the sickening discovery of his partner's treachery—he'd seemed to be a foot-ball of misfortune. Now, however, the luck appeared to have turned. The difference between the shabby unfortunate who had jumped into the Thames the previous night, and the well-dressed, handsome young fellow enjoying his grape-fruit in the sunny breakfast-room of a famous London mansion, as if he'd been doing it all his life, was as much one of temperament as circumstance. Your navy man expects to be killed sometime—possibly, to-day—but if it doesn't happen, he eats his regular meals and goes through his daily routine without wasting much thought upon the possibility. Bradley had gone further than that. To all intents he was dead when they hauled

him out of the river. He owed his life to this young—He rubbed his eyes and looked again at the young lady across the table. Now, *why* had he thought her so mature for her years! By the expression of her face—by her manner, and the half-shy way she looked up from her plate at him, as if suddenly conscious that she had been talking a little too boldly—she was the carefully-trained English miss, scarcely out of the school-room. And yet she was delightful!

"Miss Tremaine, you and your friend saved my life, last night—when it didn't seem worth much to me. If you care to bother with that sort of thing—well, do as you please with it, I'm at your service—now, or any time you call upon me."

"Then you like my suggestion? I fancy you'd become awfully interested in the service."

"Where shall I begin? What must I do?"

"Oh, we'll have Mr. Lammerford and Sir Edward Wray dining here this evening. They're sure to know of something. It might be a capital idea to keep your appointment with Colonel Pfaff, and find out what he's doing in London, just now. Sir Edward told me once that the man was a '*mouchard*'—government spy, you know—of the lower, unscrupulous class."

"Really! Do you know, I'd some such idea myself when he was so persistent about that picture, though when he said your guardian wasn't in politics I could see no reason for it. By the way, I wonder if the kind friends who presented me with these new clothes were thoughtful enough to change my personal trinkets from the pockets of the old ones? Yes, here are my pocket-knife and pipe. Now, I wonder—" (He reached for the inside pocket of the coat, and drew out a folded piece of manila paper which bore traces of having been recently soaked in water.) "Ah! Here it is! This bit of paper was lying at my feet when I dropped to get away from the Colonel—and I've been wondering if it came from his pocket when he pulled out his card-case? Let's have a look at it. Lucky the writing is in pencil and not ink—penciling doesn't

blur, and it takes a lot of wetting to wash it out."

Nan came around the table and sat down by his side. "May I look, too?"

"Of course! Your suggestion made me think of it. Let's see now? Hmph! I suppose these hieroglyphics mean something to somebody, but they've got me up in the air!"

"Wait a bit—let me have it, please! Why, it's in Russian script!"

"Is it? All right. If you say it's Urdu, I'm in no position to contradict you."

His bantering tone nettled her. "Really, you know, I'm not chaffing you! It *is* Russian—if the penciling isn't too dim, I'll read it to you. Urdu is quite different, you know—like Persian and Arabic—I speak them fluently."

He glanced at her in amazed incredulity. "Have you a pencil? Very good. Write it down in English:

"'American Squadron scheduled Spithead—May 30—June 8th. Jap Cruisers, Spithead—May 12th to 20th. Both usual anchorage—visiting warships. Cables to wooded beach under Wootton Hill. Sanukato and Maki—London importers—staying in Newport.'"

That was all. When he read it over to her a second time, it seemed even less coherent than when she translated it.

"It sounds a trifle anarchistic at first, Miss Tremaine, but it doesn't make any sense. Are you sure your translation is correct?"

"Positive. I learned Russian when I was with daddy in the Punjab."

"Hmph! One might think it referred to some naval committee on summer fêtes—receptions, illuminations, dinners and dances. What do you suppose the reference to 'cables' means?"

"Possibly the telephone cables from Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight—I believe they cross Spithead in the direction of Wootton Creek. But what do you make of those two men—Japs, I fancy—staying in Newport?"

"Why, if it's anything to do with the entertainment of visiting squadrons, there may be set pieces of fireworks on that hill. The Japs are clever at that sort of thing—possibly they are import-

ers of fireworks—and there may be a telephone connection temporarily made with those cables. You see, Miss Tremaine, if we believe we've stumbled upon something mysterious in this bit of paper, it reads in a way to suggest most anything. But on the other hand, if it was dropped by some officer detailed at the Admiralty—right there in Whithall, a stone's-throw from the Embankment—it's probably what I suggested—memorandum concerning the entertainment of visiting warships."

"Would an officer at the Admiralty write his memoranda in Russian, on manila paper, Mr. Bradley?"

"If he happened to be studying Russian, as some of them do, he might—easily. Particularly, if he'd been cautioned against letting the press men get hold of department information. As for the manila paper, this sheet is from a service memorandum pad, such as we use in our navy—doubtless your people use it also—though it can be purchased at any stationer's, of course."

"And the writing is no clue. A man like Pfaff may write a dozen different hands. Really, you know—it's mere *conjecture* that he may have dropped it. Suppose, however, that he did—and has discovered his loss—has an impression he lost it on the Embankment, last evening. He'll be rather keen upon finding you again, I fancy. And if he should recognize you with me or Guardy, there's no saying what he might do to you some dark night. But I'm quite sure he'll *not* recognize you. That hat of yours was black felt, with a broad American brim—some one may find it down the river. Your suit was of dark cloth, rather the worse for wear; you'd several days' growth of beard on your face; and he had but one glimpse, when you lighted that match. No, in this gray suit—clean-shaved—with a light-colored bowler hat—he'd never take you for the same man. All the same, I think you would better not be seen going about with us until Pfaff leaves London. There's a rear entrance to our place, here, through Abdool's house on Park Street—you can use it without attracting attention. Of course, in the house, you're

one of the family—the suggestion is merely for your own safety. I'd like Guardy to see that paper, if you don't mind, because I can't get rid of the impression that it refers to something dangerous. Suppose we put it in the library safe until evening? If you carry it about, it may become lost somewhere."

Bradley was quite willing to shift whatever responsibility there might be attached to the scrap—he was beginning to think it merely an unimportant memorandum which had no connection with Colonel Pfaff. While it was true that, as a naval officer, he'd served upon a mysterious cruiser engaged in secret-service work, his own duties had been almost blindly executive. He was merely the intelligent young officer who is confidentially permitted to navigate a war-vessel upon mysterious errands and to surmise that certain political upheavals—or absence of upheavals—may have been the direct results of such activities. But in the business of seeing—guessing—imagining the hidden causes which were to have produced such political *coups*, and planning the master-moves to checkmate them—his experience had been purely theoretical. Consequently, the astounding glimpse he had that evening of the way such matters are handled came like a sudden impression of vast machinery in motion when a subterranean door has been opened for an instant.

He'd been conscious, since morning, that he was in an unusual house, among unusual people. After the late breakfast, he had accepted this impression as being merely the every-day atmosphere of life in a household run upon a basis of great wealth.

The people—even the picturesque Afghan servants—were simple and unaffected in their bearing. But it was the simplicity of culture and fortune. One gathered from afternoon callers—from casual remarks and inquiries—that Lord Trevor and his pretty ward were not only upon fairly intimate terms with royalty, but also with most of the European celebrities. Miss Tremaine, for instance, fetched some of her water-color sketches to show the Duchess of Belgravia, as naturally as any

little school-miss would have shown them to her elderly neighbor across the street—and drifted from that to a discussion of heavy underwear for the trying London winter. At the other side of the room, His Lordship discussed polo technicalities with the younger son of a country baronet as interestedly as he did Oriental cruising with Prince Henry of Carnstadt. To his amazement, Bradley found himself one of the household, for the time being, without comprehending the perfect tact—the deep knowledge of human nature—which put him so entirely at his ease among distinguished strangers. Later, he left the place by the rear entrance and went for a constitutional in streets and Park to think it all over. And when, returning, he found immaculate dinner-clothes laid out in his room, it seemed more difficult than ever to realize that the whole combination of circumstances was not a dream.

To people with such a vast number of acquaintances, it is always difficult to secure evenings, or portions of the day, entirely free from the interruption of callers—and it has become permissible frankly to deny oneself under such circumstances when the occasion warrants it. So, after dinner, when Miss Tremaine, His Lordship, Mr. Lammerford and Bradley adjourned to the big library, those who called or telephoned were informed that the family were engaged for the evening. Nan had tried to get Sir Edward Wray, the Foreign Secretary, for dinner—but had learned that he was down in Kent for the week-end. After the cigars were lighted, Mr. Lammerford—a former Dean of the King's Messengers who still retained an advisory connection with the Foreign Office—was given Bradley's story for the past twenty-four hours, together with his antecedents. After this, the scrap of manila paper was taken from the safe and shown both to him and to His Lordship. What followed made the ex-naval officer feel as if he were a fly, crawling along the lower step of the Great Pyramid—and yet, what impressed him most forcibly in the whole leisurely discussion was the fact that two English gentlemen of about his size

and build—not particularly remarkable in a crowded street—were handling, almost carelessly, an international complication which, if allowed to mature, would have resulted in one of the greatest wars ever recorded in history. It appeared that both gentlemen had a working knowledge of Russian, for they read the penciled memorandum with ease.

"What do you make of it, Lammy?"

"Rather diffi'lt to decide—off-hand. Let me get the facts perfectly clear. Mr. Bradley had this talk with Pfaff on the Embankment last evening, not far from the Obelisk—in the fog, which I remember was fairly thick. Pfaff leaves him, apparently satisfied that he'll keep the appointm't, Monday. Bradley suspects the Colonel and plays an old scouting trick on him—fingers land on this paper when he drops on all-fours—grabs it and takes it along, subconsciously. Then, after he goes through enough to fit a man for Bedlam, he begins to wonder, this mornin', if Pfaff mightn't possibly have dropped it—and, if so, whether there's anything odd or crooked about it? Chances are, the idea wouldn't have occurred to him as worth botherin' about if you hadn't confirmed his suspicions that Pfaff was a bounder, or if Nan hadn't suggested associatin' himself with the Foreign Office. Now, in his mind, all the suspicion concerning that paper is merely a logical working out of the proposition to go in for secret diplomatic work. If he tries it, how shall he begin? He racks his brain for something the Foreign Office might like to know. Nan tells him Pfaff is said to be a *mouchard*—he remembers this paper lay about where Pfaff had been standing, and immediately pulls it from his pocket to see what it may be. I think I must compliment Mr. Bradley's intelligence in finally deciding it must have been dropped by some officer from the Admiralty. That's where I consider he shows himself excellent timber for the Foreign Office—because it's an evidence of good sense. The Admiralty isn't more than eleven hundred feet from the Embankment, and that conclusion is logical. A man who can upset his own pet theory with cold logic is

likely to prove valuable in underground diplomacy."

"Then, you consider the Admiralty explanation the correct one, Lammy?"

"I'll not say that. I consider it the most *logical* one. But, having accepted it as logical, I'm inclined to look at it in other possible lights, just as I think Bradley himself is doing. Of course he doesn't know Pfaff as *we* know him—and therefore his reasoning must be upon instinct rather than fact. What is your opinion, Trevor?"

"Oh, I fawncy you're quite right as to the bally logic of it. But if the Foreign Office relied invariably upon what's logical, we'd be in one continual mess, don't y'know. Let me consider the proposition for a moment or so, an' see how it looks."

Trevor lighted another of his long cigars and began pacing up and down the big Persian rug before the fireplace, both hands shoved into his trousers pockets. The girl—perching herself upon one end of the library table—was stroking a Maltese cat, asleep under the lamp. Lammerford and Bradley were lounging comfortably in leather chairs before the blazing logs.

"We've considered the Admiralty proposition—an' if it's the proper one, it needs no further explanation. We're not int'rested in any bally entertain-m'nt program. But suppose the paper *was* Pfaff's? Let's see how that might work out? We know Pfaff for a tool of the Berlin *Auswärtiges Amt*—a dev'lish unscrupulous one, with no decency or conscience. If he wrote that memorandum, we know it's mischief in some form or other—preferably, against England. No question about it—we *know* that. Now, given some conspiracy which is to be serious for us in the end, let's see how the proposition appears? Here we've Pfaff himself—representin' Prussia. We've the Portsmouth Naval Station—Spithead—the whole locality—representin' England. We have the Jap squadron an' the American squadron, representin' two other powers—that's four, altogether. How can one of them—Prussia—play the other three against each other to her own advawntage an' their misfortune? Or, how can two of them

—say Prussia an' America, or Prussia an' Japan—make serious trouble for the other two? We know she's got it in for *us*—no fear."

"On that basis, Trevor, you'd best line them up in the order which is most probable. Japan is our ally, you know."

"Very true, but Prussia's fightin' a commercial war against the States as bitterly as against us, an' she's nothin' at all against Japan, at present. An' our relations with the States are even more friendly than with Japan."

"Try another slant—from the Mikado's point of view. He's our ally—he's nothin' against Prussia. How about America?"

"By Jove! If—oh, the devil! That would be almost too monstrous to believe! And yet—wait a bit! Let's see how it works out? Japan wants the Philippines—means to have 'em some day, when she can float a war-loan. An' the Californians are playin' right into her hand by their short-sighted prejudice against the Japs as citizens. But, if she declares war against the States, she knows jolly well that we'll not be dragged into it as her ally—we simply couldn't afford to be! Very good. Then it would be a quite obvious policy of hers to *produce strained relations between England an' America if she could!* Eh—what? Suppose she does? Prussia isn't makin' any great objection, is she? Not in a thousand years! Case of three monkeys gettin' her chestnuts for her, is it not?"

"I say, old chap—do you know what you're suggestin'?"

"Do I *know* it! I'm beginnin' to feel creepy with the cold-blooded monstrousness of it. A bitter, bloody war between kinsmen—the sacrifice of human lives by the hundred thousand—ruin to thousands more from the effects of it! All from a Machiavellian determination to hog the world's commerce for herself!"

"But the details, man—the details! How could they possibly carry such a conspiracy through?"

"Well, here's the possibility suggested by that scrap of paper—as I see it. An' the more you think it over, the more clearly it stands out—particu-

larly, if it proves up on one detail. Just reach me 'Whittaker's Almanac,' will you—thanks. Now—just a moment. Ah! Here we have it, as I fawncied. Moon rises 2:48 A. M., on May 12th. *There'll be practically no moonlight while the Japs are our guests at the visitors' anchorage in Spithead*—which is to say, they'll have very dark nights, with quite a bit of Channel fog. Suppose each cruiser has in her hold a couple of spherical cordite mines—with cables already attached? Suppose, on some dark, foggy night, their big cranes silently lift them from the holds an' lower them alongside, squarely upon the anchorages? Suppose their electric launches—which you cawn't hear, fifty feet away—have the reels of cable concealed under tarp'lins—lay those cables on the bottom across to Wootton Beach on the Isle 'of Wight! D'you see?"

"You mean? Oh, good Lord! Blow up the American ships when they anchor, the following week! Impossible!"

"Why so? With no suspicion of such a dev'lish plot, who'll send divers under water at those anchorages—to search for mines? With plenty of our own mines in Spithead, how would they distinguish one from the other—under water—if they *were* sent down?"

"How would it work out—eventually?"

"Another case of the *Maine*—only a thousand times worse! Friendly squadron, visitin' a friendly nation, anchored before our strongest naval station—no war-ship of any other nation in sight—an' blown to scrap—men an' officers murdered by mines under the very anchorages we assign to them! What explanation could we offer, that wouldn't be ridiculed by every nation on the globe! The facts *couldn't* be explained away! An' there you are! While we're tryin' to explain—an' standin' self-convicted—the storm'll be risin' in the States. It'll be uncontrollable in a week! Bryce'll get his passports—an' one of the bloodiest wars in hist'ry'll be on! Then, it's Japan's turn. She's our ally—*sides with us, of course*. Goes down an' occupies the Philippines while the American army an' navy are busy with *us*—cleans 'em as her share of the loot, whichever wins. After a war with us,

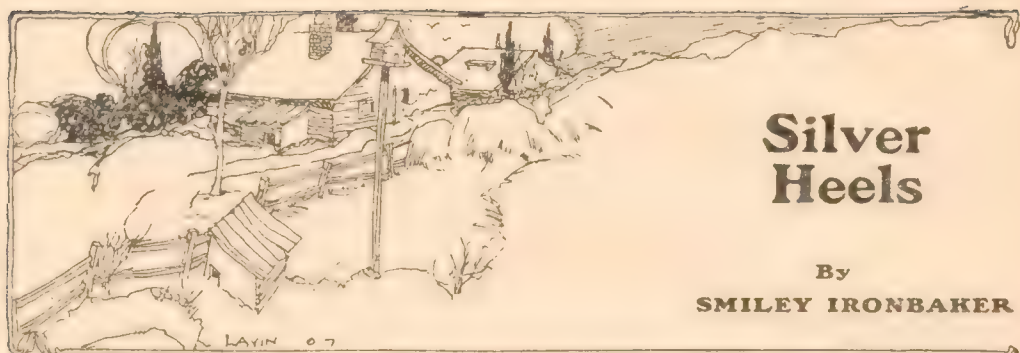
the States'll be in no shape to cross over an' reconquer the Philippines for several years—an' then, with Japan's capacity for organization, it'll be a practically impossible task. She'll never attempt it. As for Prussia? Where does Prussia come in? Pretty much all along the line, does she not? She supplies all the trade that we an' the States are forced to drop for the time! She colonizes where she'd never dare colonize if our hands weren't tied. Upon my soul, it's one of the most stupendous *coups* ever conceived! An' if Bradley, here, were not the mascot provided by a special Providence, every detail might have been carried out! Bradley, old chap—the British Government owes you a comfortable income for the rest of your life! We'll see that you get it!"

"But—my God! How will you prevent the conspiracy from being carried out—that is, prevent it without showing Japan your hand, antagonizing her, irrevocably?"

"Oh, that'll be a simple matter—with this knowledge in our possession. We'll let the Japs plant their mines an' go away as if we suspected nothin'. Awfterward, the Portsmouth divers'll go out *beyond the anchorages* with a dredge, as if they were cleanin' up the channel a bit. They'll go down an' cut those cables. They'll make some tackles fast to those mines—raise them far enough to clear the bottom, but not show above water—an' tow them out half way between Portsmouth an' Cherbourg—droppin' 'em there in a hundred fathoms. Those two Japs at Newport'll be arrested an' imprisoned for life. But it'll be so quietly done that neither Prussia nor Japan'll ever know what happened. The big *coup* just wont come off—that's all. An' of course, England never had a suspicion of it."

Bradley was stunned. He comprehended now the vast possibilities of the plot—and it seemed farcical that this sport-loving English peer, pacing the rug there in his comfortable town mansion, should dispose of it with such perfect assurance. Then—he caught a fleeting expression in the man's face—and began to understand.

"By Heaven, Lord Trevor! I *want* to play this Game!"



Silver Heels

By

SMILEY IRONBAKER

ALL Manheim was excited over Silver Heels. The hunters could talk of nothing else, and the owners of chickens that Silver Heels stole in the dark of the moon, even though the owners were not hunters, had a vigilant interest in the beautiful black fox that had come down out of the Adirondack wilderness, and taken up his residence in the wood-lots of the cleared hills of Manheim.

The first time anyone knew that a thousand dollars was running around loose on the hills of Manheim was on Election day. The voters had been over to Manheim Center to cast their ballots for county and state officers, and late in the afternoon, three loads of the voters were returning together on bobsleds over the foot-deep snow.

In the first sled was Anable Gain, who had been over to Manheim Center to see the excitement, and who wished he could vote, but couldn't because he wasn't quite old enough.

"Hey! There's a fox!" he yelled, just as the sled topped the Patent ridge. "Why, he's a black fellow!"

Sure enough, not thirty rods away, stood a fox in the bright light of the setting sun, and he was the color of anthracite coal, except that the paw he had raised was white.

"Holy Smithers!" Old Ike Condong cried. "He's wuth a thousand dollars—Great Caesar! Wish I had my gun!"

"Hey! See the black fox!" the men of the first load yelled to the men in the second, and the word was passed back to the third.

Hearing all the yelling, the fox flipped his tail, and swinging around on his hind legs, away he went at a gallop; and as he rose from the snow, every spectator could see that the animal's paws were all of them white.

"He's a silver heel!" cried Old Ike, a famous fox hunter, and from that moment they called the fox Silver Heels.

That night, in the Yellow Church store, there was a great gathering of Manheim hunters. Fox hunting was just right, the snow was just right; and the next day, they would set forth and slay Silver Heels according to the best method they could devise.

Old Ike Condong was the master of the meeting and of the hunt. He reckoned up the men at his command, and he found that these were just ten men. He obviously failed to count Anable Gain. Anable was a joke.

"Now we jes' gotter do this thing right up brown!" Ike said. "There's jes' zactly ten stands to lay to fer that old Silver Heels. I'll tend one runaway an' the dogs. Now you, Sam Fillson, you go up there to that Burnt Stump runaway, an' you set right beside the stump. If that fox comes that-a-way, he'll be right in under the gulley, an' you kin drap 'im with that twelve gauge of yourn anywhere's in sight.

"An' you, Dick Ammerset. You'll have to take the Old Cellar runaway. There's a good shot right in there, an' you can keep shootin' with that rifle of yourn tell you git 'im. Now Bill Canser, the place fer you to set is in the corner

of the split rail fence in back of Old Si Senvren's—an' if you git the fox, you git right offen his'n's land, an' swear you wa'n't on to hit, er he'll shore claim half of it—scuffle up the blood marks first!"

So Old Ike laid out the runways for each of the men to watch. Then he said that every man must be on the ground just at sunrise, for the five hounds would be turned loose on the cold trail at exactly that minute, and Old Ike would cut across country, according to the way the dogs led, to his stand in Bare Hills Gap.

Not a word was said about where Anable Gain should sit.

"Well, where are you going to put me?" Anable asked in a hard voice.

"Wall," Old Ike said, shifting his cud of tobacco, "I hadn't been calc'latin' to put you anywhars. You see, I jes reckoned as them book-learnin' fellers knowed where'd be the best place to sot themselves."

There was a guffaw at this. The fling at book-learning was especially pat, for Anable had read more hunting books, and killed no more game, so far as they knew, than anyone in Manheim.

"You see," Uncle Ike continued, rubbing it in, "they's jes 'zactly ten fox runways in this here country, and that air fox is jes bound to slide through one of them air runways. That air fox is wuth jes' zactly ten hundred dollars, I expect, an' I'd shore hate to do a sum in 'rithmetic outen the books to divide ten hundred dollars by 'leven—course you book fellers kin divide, but we ignerant cusses can't do nothin' but hunt and shoot!"

"But I know—" Anable started, but the laughing of the hunters silenced him. There was nothing that he could say that would interest them.

They talked and he listened, growing more and more glum all the while. Once he interrupted:

"But I saw that fox first!"

"I expect we fellers'll see 'im last!" Uncle Ike retorted. The youth subsided, but there was an angry flash to his eye that was lost on all hands, for none of them cared how he felt about it. The fewer the stock-holders in that

black fox hide, the greater would be the dividend declared. "Course," Ike added, "if you could shoot an' hit a horse—but shucks! you couldn't."

Anable got up from the box he was sitting on, walked to the counter and bought a box of 25-20 hard-nosed, high velocity cartridges, turned up his coat collar and strode to the door and out into the night. He was angry clear through, and hurt, too. That was the way they had always treated him—like a child. He was a good trapper, a good hunter, and he knew the country as well as the men did—better, in fact, but they jeered him, even when he caught mink and foxes and 'coons.

The trouble with Anable Gain was that he knew too much. He wasn't aware of that fact, but it was so. Anable had begun to read all the books there were to read on hunting and trapping, and he had kept it up for ten years. There were mighty few tricks about trapping and hunting that he didn't know all about.

His poor point had always been that he couldn't shoot very well. First he had carried a shotgun, and as it was a little too heavy for a boy, it didn't help his marksmanship any.

Then he had a 38-55 caliber rifle that cost three and a half cents a shot to shoot; that was more than he could afford, so he hadn't had enough practice. He had traded that rifle off for a 25-20 caliber rifle, but even that cost almost two cents a shot and his meager funds had allowed him but little practice with this weapon either.

What the men around the stove didn't know, however, was that Anable had purchased a 22 caliber repeater that fall and had fired more than two thousand shots with it on the sly—for the cartridges cost only from twenty to thirty cents a hundred. The twenty-two had paid for itself with meat, and now Anable could not only pick the eye of a sparrow at twenty steps with the twenty-two; he could hit a flying crow at fifteen rods, three times out of five, and had bagged the day's limit of four ruffed grouse flying, with the 25-20. He had intended to surprise some of the men around Manheim one of these days.

On his way home, he grew angrier and angrier. The men were taking an unfair advantage of him. He realized that they were robbing him of his chance at the black fox, by not letting him in on the hunt. He wondered if there wasn't some way of joining in the hunt, anyhow?

Suddenly he stopped and turned back to the store. He needed some carbide for his "coon jack"—an acetylene lantern used for hunting raccoons at night—and when he bought it, Uncle Ike shouted to the crowd, so he would hear:

"By gum! If the kid aint goin' out to jack that black fox an' git the best of us!"

Anable almost jumped at the thought Old Ike gave him, but he gave no sign of the idea going home. He sauntered out the door and up the road. When he reached the house, he shook the carbide ash out of the "coon jack," oiled his 25-20, changed his coat for a sweater; with the jack-light in his pocket, his rifle over his arm, and a lunch in his game bag, he headed away down the road to where he had seen the black fox that day.

He lighted his lamp and put it on his head when he reached Patent Ridge, and struck out into the snow, which was soft and made no sound under his moccasins.

There was the fox track, sure enough.

"Jove Withers!" he cried, at the size of it. "That's the big fox the farmers have been telling stole their chickens all summer! The biggest fox track I ever saw!"

Taking to the trail, he followed the long jumps down the grade, and across the meadows. His light showed it for twenty rods ahead, dark dots on the white snow. He tramped along steadily, and at a fast walk for the quarter of a mile that the fox had galloped, and the mile that it had loped. Then the fox had settled down to a walk, and as night had been near at hand, Anable reckoned that about the place where the fox began to walk, night had overtaken him.

"I'll spoil the running for the dogs, some!" Anable chuckled. And then,

more soberly, he added: "I've got a lot to learn about fox hunting at night! It's a good thing I've been hunting 'coons all the fall and shooting 'em with my rifle by jack-light!"

The fox was at least four hours ahead of him. Anable knew that most foxes walk about a mile or a mile and a half an hour, when they are hunting mice. Silver Heels would not travel any faster than that. The black fox was probably about four or five miles ahead, and it would be midnight before the hunter would come up with him.

Anable tramped along doggedly. The trail led along Patent Ridge Valley nearly three miles, and then it turned and made a straight shoot toward Old Si Senveng's barn. The hunter followed it in, and found Old Si in the barn, swearing bitterly.

"What's the matter?" Anable asked him. "I heard you calling."

"Hit's a tarnation fox, killed my game rooster—best darned rooster in the country—gone off with it, bill, spur, and wing feathers! Say, you 'coon hunt-in'? I'll gin ye five dollars if you'll go kill that fox, an' you kin have the hide!"

"Well, I don't expect there's much use of hunting foxes with a jack, but I can get six dollars for a good red, and that'll be 'leven dollars!"

Old Si was a horny fisted old farmer, who wouldn't have given up a day's work to vote for a president, so he hadn't been out election day, nor had he heard of the black fox.

Anable circled the cow yard and found the big fox track out in the corn field. The fox sank deeper in the snow every step, and there were occasional feathers along the galloping trail.

Anable was glad of that rooster's fate. It meant that the fox would go a mile or thereabouts and then lie down and feed. After feeding, he would romp and play a while, and then seek a comfortable place to lie down and sleep. Perhaps the fox suspected that the next day it would have a long race, and so got its supper early. It was about ten o'clock when the hunter reached the barn, and Old Si had been ranting more than half an hour, having been stirred out by the cackling of his hens.

Anable made the next mile in swift time—through the open fields, and up into the Bare Hills west of the Yellow Church. Now that he thought of it, Anable remembered seeing a big fox track in the cow paths up on those hills during the summer, and he suspected that the fox probably made his headquarters in the timber lots on the ridge beyond, toward which he was headed.

At the foot of the Bare Hills, there was a flat rock. On the flat rock, when Anable came to it, were the rooster's feathers, along with its head, feet and wings.

"Now I've got to hunt some!" Anable muttered. "That old cuss knows enough to watch his back track—wonder what he'll say to a jack-light?"

Instead of following the tacks right up the Bare Hills, he walked along the foot for a few hundred yards, and then came back along the back of the ridge till he struck the trail. The fox crossed over the ridge, and down into the valley toward the Timber Lots.

The hunter followed the tracks only a short distance, to make sure that he went to the Timber Lots, and then, putting out his jack, Anable went down the valley, struck in at the foot of the Timber Lots, and came up through the edge of the timber, with his light burning again. He did not flash it ahead, however, but kept the round spot-light on the snow, watching for the trail. There was no doubt in his mind that the fox would go to a rocky ledge or hillside in the woods, and probably curl up somewhere and go to sleep.

Sure enough, he found the trail where it entered the woods, and then he sat down to rest and eat his lunch. There was a little brook just above him, and he went to it to fill his lamp tank, and get a good drink. Finally, when he was rested and thoroughly ready, he swung into the fox trail, and crept along it, inch by inch.

The snow made no sound under his feet, and he stepped over or under or around every bush and laden limb. He hardly made two rods a minute. He searched the woods on all sides with the white, sharp spot-light. In one place a faint flutter caused him to look up, and he saw a great owl staring down at

him, amazed. In another place, a great temptation assailed him, for there sat a big 'coon, glaring stupidly into his light, which he turned resolutely away. A dead 'coon could not begin to compare to a live fox in the bush—if the fox was Silver Heels and as black as coal.

The rods lengthened ahead of him, and the fox trail kept straight on for hundreds of yards, as though going right over into the next township. Anable was impatient, and thought of stepping along more rapidly.

Suddenly the hunter saw that the trail was leading into a ravine. He knew that no fox would go to sleep in a ravine. He stopped, wondering what to do. Finally, he turned to the right and went up the point of the ridge on the south side.

"Brother fox is watching the bottom of that ravine!" the hunter whispered. "He may be this side or that side—I've sure got to be careful. He's circled back on his tracks and I must see him from above—and then not shoot over."

Inch by inch he made his way to the top of the ridge, and with his light, saw that the fox had picked a mighty thickety ravine for his tracks to go through.

"He's cute!" Anable mused. "He knew nothing could get through there without making a noise like a train of cars!"

Forty rods up the ridge Anable threw his light into the ravine and down the side of the ridge. It was a perfectly ghostly thing, that silent, revealing bar of light striking through the dark woods, exposing the trees, the bushes, and the sparkles of the snow.

About half way down the ridge was a flat ledge of stone, covered with a thicket of hemlock saplings. As the edge of the light struck into the thicket, Anable had a sudden jar in his heart. Right there was a track, a fox track in the snow, not twenty yards distant.

Throwing his rifle to his shoulder, he caught the light on the sights and then steadied the light across the thicket, following the fox track down the ravine side.

On the near side, with his nose pointing down into the ravine, was Silver Heels, fast asleep.

The ivory front sight came true on the back of the animal's head, and as the sight came to a solid rest, Anable Gain pulled the trigger.

For a moment he thought he had missed; then the great, black brush moved out, the body quivered and half rolled over.

Anable leaped down the hillside, picked up his wonderfully beautiful trophy and let the light of his jack-lamp shine up and down the rich fur. Then he shouldered it and strode away through the timber to the nearest road, where he put out the light to go home in the early morning darkness.

His mother let him sleep late that morning, and it was nearly noon when he ate his breakfast. Then, with his rifle over his shoulder, he started out to see what the mighty fox hunters of Manheim were up to.

He went up to the Old Caller runway first, for it was nearest. Dick Ammer-set was there, watching with his rifle.

"Hello!" he greeted. "Jes' turnin' out to git that air black fox? Toward noon's best time to still hunt 'em!"

Anable grinned at the jeer, and went on to Sam Fillson, at the Burnt Stump runway. Sam was ugly.

"Keep right on movin'!" he growled at Anable. "That air fox may be a mile ahead the dogs, an' I don't want him scairt if he comes this way!"

Anable cut across country toward where he had seen the big 'coon. As he topped the Bare Hills he heard the dogs coming. They weren't on the cold trail of the night before. They were in full cry, and Anable cut down into the Gap, to a crossing, and waited. Twenty minutes later a big red fox came into sight and started past, twenty rods away. Anable drew down his rifle and opened fire. At the third shot the fox went down.

"Well, naow, you can shoot some!" a voice exclaimed, and looking behind him, Anable saw Old Ike Conding just coming up. "Naow if he'd been that black un we'd shore had 'im!"

Anable didn't know what to say. Old Ike continued:

"Some dod-ratted cuss got onto that track before day this morning an' tromped hit all to smithers—I'm dis-

'p'inted. The dogs couldn't pick hit up no ways—they red devils is running all over, an' the dogs is after two or three --here comes my Old Belcher! Now where you reckon that black fox went to, Anable?"

"It isn't for any book-learning chap to make any remarks to an old timer!" Anable answered.

"Well, now, you know, you're gettin' some sense, Anable. If you hadn't always been so all-fired stuck on yourself you could have stood in with us fellers to-day. Um-m! You sure did get that red feller—you've picked up a heap o' shooting sents you missed them deer!"

Anable grinned and walked on down to the road. Half the red fox went to the dogs, of course, and that was enough to give the men three dollars worth of chewing and smoking; it also paid for another thousand twenty-two's, and a hunting book thrown in, for Anable Gain.

Anable disappeared for three days, about three weeks later. The second day of his disappearance the evening papers that came to Manheim in the night mail had a paragraph that stunned the gathering in the Post Office. The paragraph read:

New York, December 7.—The prettiest and most valuable black fox skin ever brought to this city was sold here to-day by Anable Gain, a hunter from Yellow Church, in Manheim, which is in the foothills of the Adirondack mountains. There were nine bidders for the skin, and it was finally sold to a South Fifth avenue raw fur-dealer for \$1,455, the highest price that has been paid for a single pelt in this city in several years. Anable Gain is one of the greatest hunters in the Adirondacks, and he was able to kill this fox only after following the track many miles at night over the snow. When he found the animal at last, it was asleep, and he shot it by the light of his 'coon jack-light. "Silver Heels," as the old hunters called the beautiful animal, never knew what struck it—but it was a 25-20 rifle ball, right at the base of the skull.

"Holy Smithers!" Old Ike Conding exclaimed. "I'm—Sho! We'd orter took him in with us! Fourteen hunderd an' fifty-six dollars—Gosh!"

There was dead silence around the fire. When Anable Gain returned the following day, with forty pounds of

ammunition and a whole new library of natural history books, there was a line of respectful old woodsmen and hunters sitting around the parlor stove of his house, waiting for him.

"These gentlemen came over to see 'f they couldn't borrow some of your hunting books, Anable," his mother said to him. "I didn't know which ones to let them have! And say, Anable, Si Senvreng left this five dollars for you

—said it was for killing that chicken thief."

"There's a lot of them books, boys!" Anable exclaimed enthusiastically. "Take whichever ones you like."

"That's fine," Old Ike exclaimed. "I want the one that tells about huntin' foxes at night with a jack-light—I'm kind of an old dog, but I kin learn new tricks if they's worth good money—yes-siree!"

The Skeletons

By HORACE HAZELTINE

Author of "THE SABLE LORCHA," etc.

WHEN Billy Hardacre's cousin, who married the Duke of Badminton, found His Grace graceless, she came back to America, secured a divorce, and developed an acute case of hysteria. Later her hysteria became chronic and was classed as emotional insanity. Later still, her fortune was taken from her control, and Billy, who was her nearest surviving kinsman, was made its trustee by the courts.

Nathalie Carrol, with whom Billy had been in love ever since she wore pinafores and he wore kilts, was being educated at this period, in a French convent where American newspapers are not allowed to penetrate. And in a year or two the world had so far forgotten the unhappy duchess as never—or certainly very rarely—to refer to her. Which was not so odd, seeing that Billy had placed her in a New England sanitarium, under her maiden name of Katherine Summers. Of this fact only the elder Carrols were informed, and them he had sworn solemnly to secrecy.

"I run up to see her once every week or ten days," he told them, "always hoping to find that a miracle has been wrought, and that she is herself again, and always coming away disappointed.

It's a terrible thing to know oneself that there's insanity in one's family, and I'd prefer not to have it talked about. Of course, under the circumstances, I shall never marry."

Mrs. Carrol would have given her priceless collection of laces, reputedly the finest in America, to have had things different. She had always rather counted on Billy for a son-in-law. He wasn't wealthy, but he came of good old stock, and he was the most lovable, honorable, gentle and yet manly boy she knew. But she couldn't dispute his contention. Where there was a mental twist in the line there was danger.

As for Nathalie, she waited very patiently for Billy to show an affection more ardent in character than the friendly, brotherly interest to which he consistently confined himself. And then she gave up hope, and engaged herself to Aleck Lloyd. And Billy, who would have given more than laces—the eternal peace of his own soul, even—to be in Aleck's boots, went on masking his heart pain behind a Spartan smile, and twisting one innocent circumstance after another to his own detriment, so that Nathalie might not guess.

He didn't think that Aleck Lloyd was

good enough for her, of course. He didn't think that any man was really good enough for her, himself included. And he couldn't quite understand her choice. But what puzzled him more than that was how her father, the most wide-awake middle-aged gentleman that he knew, could be so solemnly and drowsily owl-like as not to see that Lloyd was a "bluff"—a "four-flush"—lacking principle and making his way sheerly by smooth sycophancy.

And then there came that day when, lunching at his club, he overheard Mr. Carrol's name and Aleck Lloyd's linked in a bit of gossip that startled and amazed him.

"I shouldn't have believed it either," said one of the male tabbies, relishing his scandal as lesser of the breed relish catnip, "but it came straight from a man I know in Lloyd's office. They say it was because of Lloyd's acquaintance with the matter that John Schuyler Carrol accepted him as a son-in-law. Now Mrs. Carrol has got wind of the thing, and it's the divorce courts for hers."

This happened during Horse Show week, on a day when Billy was particularly busy. It was that afternoon when, ponies being the programmed feature, the Garden was all a-blossom and a-bloom with little people. On other days the children attended, if they attended at all, in the morning, and the afternoons and evenings saw only American Beauties and other stately and highly-colored varieties in the boxes. But to-day it was as though every other box had a border of sweet alyssum or forget-me-nots; and ageratum, which is infant's breath, mingled its perfume with the grosser yet identifying smells of horse and tanbark.

Billy, leaning against the rail of the enclosure, might have been mistaken for a good-looking young groom by the uninformed and undiscerning, for he wore riding breeches and puttees, and a checkered cap of exaggerated diameter. But his breeches and coat were of tweed and *not* of whipcord, which makes all the difference. He leant there with his back to the ponies and his brooding gaze fixed on Box 33, which was destitute of children and every-

thing else except six empty wooden chairs. Throngs surged by him in double and triple column, charging the air with dust, stirred by their shuffling feet. On either side of him curious ones pressed to get a closer view of the judging; but he held his place meditatively undisturbed, his brown eyes half closed and his clean-shaven lips drawn gravely to a straight line.

"Skeletons!" he was saying to himself. "I wonder what family hasn't one or two locked in the closet! And then there comes a day when they carelessly drop the key, or leave it lying about, and the next thing they know the bones are rattling for all the world to hear. Poor little tots!" he went on, with a glance over some of the near-by boxes, where the young folk had broken into sudden gleeful applause over a ring incident. "How little they know of the grewsome things in their own homes!"

John Schuyler Carrol! Nathalie's father! Was it possible that Nathalie knew? Was it possible that Nathalie—But just at that moment the band broke blaringly into a Strauss waltz, and Billy's eyes, coming back from the little tots to Box 33, rested on a slim, fair girl in a Caillot gown and an Esthermeyer hat, who had a white-gloved hand on one of the chair backs. And that was Nathalie herself.

Two other young women were behind her, but Billy didn't see them. They bowed, though, when he took off his cap; so his failure to see them didn't very much matter. Nathalie didn't bow; she just smiled, and having placed the chair to her satisfaction, sat down and held a hand out over the box rail.

"I was busy all morning putting some of Brooke Hampton's steeplechasers over the bars," Billy explained, "and now I must run away in a minute and give little Grace Willets the benefit of my moral support. She's going to drive that Shetland of hers, and vows she'll never have the courage unless I lead the beast to the gate and wait there for her return." And all the while he was thinking: "I don't believe she can possibly know anything of that skeleton as yet." For Nathalie, beamingly care-free, apparently, was smiling approval.

"The poor kiddie!" she exclaimed. "I

know how she feels. I was frightened half to death the first time I showed Musette." And then she asked: "Will you do as much for me, to-morrow, Billy? I'm going to drive Alicia, you know."

"Me?" he questioned. "Why, that's Aleck's privilege, isn't it?"

"Aleck doesn't dress the part," she laughed. "He'll sit here in the box and applaud when the blue ribbon is pinned on."

Billy grinned. "There's nothing I'd like better," he told her, "but to-morrow it won't be possible."

"Out of town again?" she queried, roguishly.

He nodded.

"How devoted you are!" she exclaimed, laughing once more. "Is she very beautiful?"

His gaze dropped for a moment. "Very beautiful," he answered, "but not as you are. She isn't young."

"I know," she rallied him. "A widow—a rich widow. Now don't say I'm wrong."

"You're half wrong. She isn't exactly a widow."

"But rich?"

"Yes, rather rich."

"You might tell me all about her," she pleaded. "Why won't you, Billy?"

His recent thoughts guided his phrasing. "It's the skeleton in my closet," he told her, sober-eyed.

Oh, shameless!" she cried, in mock abhorrence. "Now I never *shall* forgive you."

Billy went up to Warrenton the next day to see his cousin, the Duchess of Badminton, and she talked so excitedly and enigmatically, laughing and crying by turns, that he came away with the conviction that her condition was distinctly worse. And for a week and more he was so depressed that he fancied he must be already in the early stages of the family malady. He seldom went out—which was the reverse of his usual routine—and he sat for hours at a time, thinking of but one subject, and tracing it through all its cognate branches.

"One never can tell what a girl sees in a man," he was wont to say to himself in these ruminative moments. "But

whatever Nathalie sees in him isn't there, and that's the one best bet."

He was saying it one night as he sat in the little parlor of his bachelor suite in the Loyalton, musing over the whole distressful situation, and running the gamut of memory from those early days when he and Nathalie romped together as five and three year-olds, respectively, in that restricted *arboretum* called Gramercy Park, to the very recent one on which he had overheard it whispered at the Stuyvesant Club, that John Schuyler Carrol had not been living at home for a month and more, and that Mrs. Carrol had set in motion the machinery that manufactures marital freedom. This latter note in the scale of recollection rang most discordantly, refusing to harmonize with any of his preconceived notions of the Carrols, separately or combined. Father Carrol had never impressed him as that sort, and Mother Carrol was an angel who might have been expected to suffer in silence, rather than give the world an inkling of her domestic woes.

He was thinking of this when a messenger boy aroused him with a telegram from his mentally unsound kinswoman; and though he tore it up instantly, more than ever convinced by it of the hopelessness of their mutual plight, it so fitted in with the tenor of his thoughts that he continued to meditate for a while longer. He was still thinking when, having thrown his good-night cigaret back of the gas log, he rose with a yawn to prepare for bed. And at that moment his telephone rang.

The voice that came over the wire was Nathalie's; and she seemed nervous and agitated.

"I want you to come up here," she told him, "just as fast as a taxi will bring you. Mother is away, and I'm alone, and—and something has happened."

Billy was not the sort to question a request of that kind from that source. Instead of getting out his pajamas, he got out his fur coat and hat. He didn't stop to order a taxi by telephone either. He knew that there were a dozen of them at the corner, outside Sherry's, and he ran until he came to the first

one. Flinging the driver an address and a command to hurry, he plunged in and slammed the door.

When he reached the Carrol house he plunged out just as precipitately, made his command "Wait!" this time, and mounted the Carrol steps by bounds, three at a time. Nathalie herself, who was awaiting him in the vestibule, threw open the glass door. Then she clutched him excitedly by both arms and exclaimed:

"Aleck Lloyd is a thief?"

Billy was on the point of saying that that was no news to him, but he controlled himself and said, instead:

"What has he stolen now?"

"He broke open Mama's desk and took some of her letters."

Billy put two and two together very quickly and was more flabbergasted than ever over what the sum seemed to indicate in the domestic relations of the Carrols.

"Jeanette saw him do it." Jeanette was Mama's maid. "He did it while he was waiting in the library for me to come downstairs. Whatever do you suppose could have possessed him?"

Billy said he was sure he didn't know; but at the same time, though he didn't say so, he thought he had a very fair idea.

"And I sat there and talked to him the evening through; and all the while he had those letters in his pocket. As soon as he was out of the house Jeanette came and told me. Then I telephoned you."

"You're sure Jeanette was right?" Billy asked.

"I saw the broken lock and I saw an empty pigeon-hole."

"And you trust Jeanette?"

"Implicitly."

"Then I'll get them back for you," said Billy, with confidence.

"I knew you would," she told him, calmed now by his reassurance. "I knew you would if anybody could."

He turned to open the door.

"And Billy," she added, a little shyly, "my engagement's broken—of course."

"Of course," he returned. "It seems to be a night for breaks. I may do some breaking myself before I see you again."

He had in mind the smug face of her ex-"futura," but she, forgetting for the moment the pilfered letters, was certain that his remark had to do with the affair of the widow who was not exactly a widow, but who was very beautiful and very rich, and which constituted, by his own confession, the skeleton in his closet.

He knew very little of Lloyd's habits and especially of his midnight haunts. But he had seen him several times at the club in the small hours, and on the chance that he might be there now he had the taxicab set him down at its portal. But the door man assured him that though Mr. Lloyd had dined there, he had not returned; and so he hastened to the only other likely place he knew, which was what Lloyd called his "diggings"—a bachelor apartment house in the Thirties, just off Fifth Avenue. He went there determined to camp on the doorstep the night long, if need be, against the letter-thief's return. For if recovery was to be accomplished it must be with the least possible delay, since photographed copies of the missives might be procured with the return of daylight.

But the camping wasn't necessary, for the elevator boy at Lloyd's "diggings" said that Mr. Lloyd was in, and added that he had left word that the gentleman was to come "right up."

"That's the kindest, most considerate thing he ever did for me." Billy commented—not audibly—and then added the mental observation: "I wonder whom he can be expecting!"

Before the elevator reached Lloyd's floor, which was the fifth, its bell rang, and Billy feared that he might be interrupted, unless he cut out all preliminaries and went straight for what he had come after. He even went so far as to try the doorknob instead of ringing, but the latch was turned the wrong way for him, and he had to wait until Lloyd's Jap valet admitted him with a bow and a smile, and without question.

Lloyd, who was tall and angular and rather long and sheep-like of visage, stared at him in wide-eyed surprise through the round lenses of his nose glasses. He opened his mouth and Billy knew that he was about to ask, in his

usual stilted, professional fashion: "To what fortuitous circumstance am I to attribute the honor of this visit?" But Billy knew, too, that the elevator must already have reached the ground floor, and was probably taking Lloyd's expected visitor aboard; so he took the question for granted and answered it before it was asked.

"I'm here for the letters you took from the Carrols," he said, bluntly.

Lloyd's face went a shade paler, but he managed a smile and a little imitation of a short, amused laugh, as he replied:

"I fancy you have been drinking, Mr. Hardacre."

"I don't care about your fancies," said Billy. "I want the letters, and I want 'em quick."

"I haven't the slightest idea—" began Lloyd; but he got no farther. For he was blocking the way, and Billy had no time for conversation. Therefore, a little rudely, with shoulder and elbow, Billy jolted him to one side and pressed into the room, at the entrance of which this brief colloquy had taken place. For the obstruction, having been more like a lath than a man, had given him a clear view into the room on either side, revealing on a flat-top mahogany desk, under a shaded droplight, an oblong, ribbon-tied packet, which was the exact counterpart of his mental visualization of the thing he sought.

At this the jolted obstruction gasped, stridently, a single word:

"Kimo!"

To Billy, within two strides of the desk, it sounded like some weird effort at incantation or exorcism; nor was the impression lessened when the Japanese valet, responding instantly, fairly leaped the floor space to his side.

But Billy had the letters in his hand by then, and it would have taken an army of little yellow men to wrench them from him. Just at that moment, moreover, the bell of the apartment rang long and loud; and Kimo, for the want of more definite orders from his master, fled to answer it. Whereupon Billy found Lloyd facing him once again, this time with a cynical smile.

"Possibly you will appear less recalcitrant, Mr. Hardacre," he said, with

chill precision, "when confronted by my visitor and client, for whom those letters were obtained."

As he spoke, there appeared in the doorway the spare figure, ruddy face, and snowy mustache of Mr. John Schuyler Carrol. Billy Hardacre's jaw set hard, while his forehead contracted to a frown.

Mr. Carrol nodded to Lloyd, but he crossed to Billy and extended a cordial hand.

"A very pleasant surprise, indeed," he said, heartily.

Billy put his hands and the letters behind his back, while his frown deepened, and his jaw muscles stood out in knots, hollowing his cheeks.

"I happen to be just going," he muttered, between clenched teeth.

"Wait for me," said Mr. Carrol, ignoring the young man's all too obvious perversity. "I shall be only a minute. I'll give you a lift in my car."

"I've a taxi waiting, thank you," Billy told him, and started towards the door.

"Wait for me, all the same," Mr. Carrol persisted. "I have something important to say to you."

But Billy paid no heed. He had liked Mr. Carrol once, but just now he hated him. Any husband that could prove faithless to such an angel of a wife as was Mrs. Carrol, deserved to be hamstrung. He was nearing the room door when Lloyd spoke.

"Mr. Carrol," he said, "Hardacre forced his way in here a few minutes ago, and now he is trying to leave with certain papers I procured for you at your request. Until he restores them, my man will not let him go. Kimo, lock the hall door!"

"Kimo," said Mr. Carrol, coolly, "do nothing of the sort. Mr. Hardacre and I and the papers are going together." He turned to Lloyd. "You know I came here simply to get them. Is there anything you wish to say to me?"

His expectant son-in-law said there was.

"Very well, I'll stop to hear it. Billy, go ahead; dismiss your taxi, and get into my car and wait for me." But Billy still appearing heedless, it became necessary for Mr. Carrol to bring an emer-

gency brake into action. "In the car you'll find Mrs. Carrol," he added.

Lloyd's eyes and mouth opened in amazement. "Mrs.—!" he exclaimed; and then was silent.

Billy halted and turned, staring in perplexity, first at Mr. Carrol, then at Lloyd, and then at Mr. Carrol again. And Mr. Carrol, returning the stare the last time, slyly and unmistakably winked.

All his life Mr. Carrol had pinned his faith to the theory that questions and answers were the least efficient tools with which to dig to the rock bottom of fact. They might do for lawyers; but they wouldn't do for him. He had a more roundabout way, but when the goal was reached there was no doubt in his mind that it was really the goal. If he doubted a man, for instance, he didn't seek witnesses. He just quietly, and often with great ingenuity, wove a net and let the victim entangle himself in it of his own free will.

"I hate like old Ned to find I've been deceived in a young man," he said, addressing Mrs. Carrol and Billy, as the limousine, well heated and lighted, sped smoothly northward over the level asphalt of Fifth Avenue, "but it was better to discover it before he married Nathalie than after. Mother never did just approve of His Lankiness, but he very nearly shut my eye up, just as he did Daughter's. Would you like me to tell the story, Billy?"

Billy, aching to ask a dozen rude questions, had been biting his tongue lest some of them might inadvertently escape; and Mr. Carrol's proposition was like water in a thirsty land. He said he would like it very much.

"My first suspicion that Lloyd had a yellow streak," began the narrator, "was when he let it out to me in confidence that while posing as a reform candidate for state senator, he was considering a secret proposition from the Tammany leaders. That ought to have been enough of itself, but I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt, since there are men who are morally lax in politics, yet upright enough in their personal private relations. So I cooked up a little plot—baited a hook, as it

were, to see if he would rise to it—and he did."

Then Mr. Carrol went on to tell, with considerable circumstantiality, how, on finding that he should have to be out of town for the best part of a month or six weeks, he conferred with Mother, and they arranged together that the absence should be made to appear, to Lloyd at least, as due to some domestic unpleasantness.

"We entered into it," he pursued, "with all the zest of a game. We made it a little comedy, but barred out an audience—though I understand that through some leak in Lloyd's office a few stragglers managed to get in and occupy orchestra seats. Lloyd, of course, was cast for the rôle of villain, though I hoped he'd turn out in the end to be the hero, and justify my first impression of him. The first act was played the day I left New York. The scene was laid in his office, and I appeared as a very wicked and very distressed old reprobate who had been found out in his marital treachery. 'Aleck,' I said, 'would you take a divorce case for a man if you knew him to be in the wrong? Would you undertake to defend me, if you were satisfied Mother had grounds for action?' You see I made it wholly supposititious. He said there wasn't anything he wouldn't do for me—which sounded very well, but wasn't as good as it sounded, since he never seemed for a moment to doubt my entire culpability. 'All right,' I said, 'I'm leaving home now, but I'll probably see you later.' When I got back to town, yesterday, the second act was played. 'The only real evidence Mother's got in my case,' I said, 'are some letters—love letters. I happen to know just where they are: they're locked in her desk in the library. If we can get hold of them, our case is won. Can you get those letters?' He never raised an objection. That really ended him in my estimation, but I determined to go on with the third act, and let him hang himself as he deserved. You know most of the rest, but you don't know it quite all."

And then Mr. Carrol began untying and unwrapping the packet of letters which Billy had turned over to him.

"You see the real climax of our little comedy fell down because he never opened this bundle after stealing it. You probably didn't give him time." Mr. Carrol took two or three of the letters from the packet and handed them to Billy. "Look them over," he said. "And take note that this particular one was on top."

Billy's exclamation was tinged with astonishment. "Why, they're in your own handwriting, sir, and addressed to Mrs. Carrol!"

"Of course. They're my love letters. That's what I said. Read the top one," please."

Billy drew it from the envelope. It began with: "Sweetheart Wife." Then it went on to explain the result of his interview with Lloyd. "He's going to break open your desk and rifle it when he comes to call on Nathalie to-morrow evening. I want you to wrap up a bundle of my letters to you, with this one on top, and to place it so he can get it without trouble. I also want you to have Jeanette keep an eye on him from the moment he enters the library until Nathalie comes down to join him." And at the bottom of the page was this postscript:

Dr. McLean and I are going to Warrenton again in the morning, and I want you to join us. Meet us at the Grand Central at 9:30.

Billy, experiencing a sudden throbbing of his throat pulses, and with his fingers and toes all nervously a-tingle, let the letter slip to the floor of the car. Mrs. Carrol, who had sat adoringly silent throughout her husband's recital, started forward.

"Why Billy!" she exclaimed. "What on earth's the matter?"

For answer he laid impulsively hold of one of her hands and also of one of Mr. Carrol's.

"You're both entirely too good to me," he said, warmly, his voice shaking.

"Good Lord!" cried Mr. Carrol. "I

forgot that postscript. We didn't intend—but—"

"Mr. Carrol has spent the better part of the last six weeks at Warrenton, Billy," Mrs. Carrol confessed. "He's had Dr. McLean there a dozen times. Your cousin is no more insane than I am. Dr. McLean says so. It was nothing—never has been anything but nerves. And now it's not even that. She's a well woman—a normal woman. And on Saturday she's coming to us for the rest of the winter."

For a long moment, Billy sat brokenly silent. He wanted to laugh and he wanted to cry. It is an unusual emotional experience to witness the crumbling of two skeletons in less than twenty minutes. It didn't seem quite real. But how—or even why—should he dispute so eminent an authority as Dr. McLean?

When the moment ended, the car was standing at the Carrol curb.

"Do you mind waiting just a minute, until I tell you something?" he asked.

"We'll wait until morning," said Mr. Carrol, "if you'll tell us the one thing we most wish to hear."

"I want to thank you—"

"Oh, we can't wait for that," Mother Carrol objected.

"And to tell you," Billy went on, unheeding, "of a telegram I had to-night from Katherine. 'If you don't marry Nathalie Carrol,' she wired, 'I'll leave every penny to charity.' You don't want to see me disinherited, do you?"

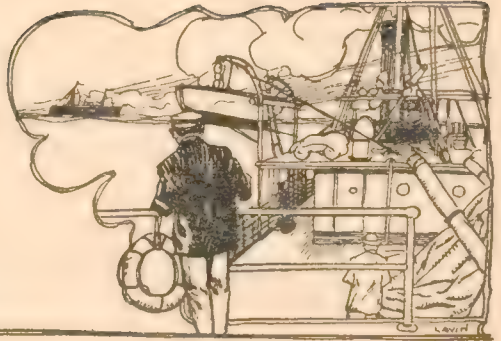
Before he had quite finished, Mother Carrol's arms were about his neck and her kiss put the period to his words. Father Carrol had his hand and was squeezing it until it ached. And, as though they had carefully rehearsed it many times, two words fell from their lips in perfect unison:

"My son!"

"And I always vowed," observed Billy, with a sort of gleeful solemnity, "that I'd never marry for money."

The Banner of the Buccaneer

By
**FREDERIC
IRVING**



HALDRUM turned from the main saloon with sorrow in his heart. Outside, every shadow contrasted with the light and life within, and with the vision which had turned his head.

"If she knew the truth it would be the end of our acquaintance," he grumbled to himself.

From the funnels of the steamer, clouds of inky smoke poured, and now and then the blinding rays of a search-light made the darkness more intense by sharp comparison as they shot through space or fell across the swell of the water or, now and then, were turned back by the impenetrable masses of smoke in the wake of the steamer.

Aft, Haldrum huddled in a heap in a deck chair as he peered into the gloom. "Only to think how unreasonable is fate," he murmured. "I, Stephen Haldrum, may differentiate that wonderful integral and yet may not command enough ready money to be decent when the chance of my life comes."

A door opened and again Haldrum heard merry voices. Without the money for his breakfast in his pocket, how dare he join that party—and yet, as he thought, how dare he fail to join it? Haldrum had sought no society—his mood was too disconsolate—but as he passed through the saloon, the one man on board whom he knew, had called to him. Then, before he could hesitate, he had been presented. Who they were he could guess only from the fact that they were young people whom Cleaver Grimm evidently knew—Cleaver Grimm, the notorious market raider

—rich beyond the aspirations of any reasonable avarice, and by all common rules intimately acquainted only with the rich and the socially entrenched. Then, in an instant, as Grimm had bowed to the last and said, "Miss Ball, I present Mr. Haldrum, a wizard of scientific legerdemain," he had known that he did not care who or what were the rest of the party, if only he might stay to talk to Miss Ball—Beatrix, he had heard her called.

"Say that you do not approve of the proposition, Mr. Haldrum," cried Miss Ball with a flash of brown eyes and a dazzling smile.

"I swear, Miss Ball—swear on the Holy Koran—though I have not yet heard the proposition."

Some one hastened to proclaim that there was a petty gambling device aboard ship. It had been proposed that they go to it and each play a stipulated small amount, the total sum, if anything, which should be won, to go to the young woman who scored highest. Haldrum shivered. Save for a few stray pennies he knew that his pocket was empty; and on the best excuse he could extemporize, he fled to the sheltering gloom of the after-deck—yet sadly enough, for even in the darkness, on the flecking waves or against the mountains of smoke, his imagination was interposing one picture.

"After all," he murmured at length, "after all, even the true and unfailing formula goes down before the material needs of this world. It's no use. I'm in to lose."

A chair moved beside him; there in the darkness a man seated himself.

"Why, Haldrum! You here? What's the matter with you? I thought I had done you a good turn, but you don't seem to see it so."

Haldrum turned wearily toward the voice. In the darkness he could see only the snakelike glitter of Cleaver Grimm's eyes and the gray indication of a mustache.

"Yes, I'm here—where next, I do not know. I am stone-broke," murmured Haldrum.

"You? Are you not the fellow who presented the marvelous letters from the engineering professors when I was mixed up in electrics?"

"I had some recommendations, but that doesn't keep me from being broke. That's why I am on this boat—back to the city for me, though I have just discovered by mathematics a most wonderful result and proved its existence in practice. I've got to abandon my work. It's a pity, Mr. Grimm, when a fellow has the world by the collar, that he can't hold on. I tell you, this varying vibratory intensity theory of mine will make men take notice."

"What is it, Haldrum?"

"If you are asking as a courtesy to me, I thank you."

"But I am not—I want to be the first to know, for it may be worth while."

So in the dark, Haldrum declared that this secret was his only stock in trade, and by barter secured what he must have. For a consideration he told Grimm just what his work had been, pocketed his pay, promised to furnish drawings on the morrow and started to flee, when Grimm called him back.

"Which one is it, Haldrum?"

"I don't understand you."

"Oh, come: I understand you, though. Which one is it? You did not premeditate this or you would have driven a harder bargain."

But Haldrum did not answer.

"It is Beatrix Ball?"

Haldrum laughed as if that were impossible.

"Well," continued Grimm, "bear in mind that you are now under contract not to accept other employment in the line of electrical engineering without

first giving me a chance to continue our arrangement if I will pay you more."

"As you say, Mr. Grimm—I will proceed with the agreement when we land. Good-night." And again Haldrum started. There chanced then to fall across the black, wind-swept night of the after-deck a pencil of light, which, though it did not reach Cleaver Grimm, still revealed him standing with his back toward the rail, his lips parted in a smile that seemed a harbinger of that black, death-dealing financial victory which he loved.

Again Haldrum paused. He could not think that in the revelation of so little of his discovery a layman in engineering could find detail enough on which to predicate financial gain; he could not believe Grimm so delighted with a first promise of his services; and if not, what then? Ah, he had mentioned the name of Miss Ball. The explanation must follow.

Within, Haldrum found the party at the first slot machine. For some reason Miss Ball had declined to join in the play. Haldrum approached.

"Oh, Mr. Haldrum," she exclaimed, "you will take me up forward? It is positively stifling here." And so, while the others had their throw at the wheel, Haldrum had his chance, as in the half light forward they now counted the glimmer of the lighthouses on the shore, now speculated on the speed of the ship or the height of the waves or on the chance of a bright to-morrow. It was all very wonderful to him.

Once he heard footsteps above the rattle of the wind, and turning, thought he caught a glimpse of the face of his suddenly acquired patron; but there was now no smile on his face.

"As to Mr. Grimm," whispered Haldrum to the girl, now so close to her ear to prevent eavesdropping that the wind brought strands of her hair across his face and a tingling joy to his heart, "where has he been?"

"Mr. Grimm has been on this trip, for the purpose of learning information which will aid in his fight on the shipping trust. He pretends to be my friend—thinks that I do not see his plan to use me."

There ensued a moment of silence.

Haldrum divined that the elderly Grimm was a disappointed suitor, for he remembered some mention by Grimm of the name of Beatrix Ball.

"He plans to use you—your influence, you mean?" he ventured at length.

"That would be telling, Mr. Haldrum."

Haldrum would have felt a stinging rebuke in the words but for the sweetness of the gentle voice. As it was, he said no more.

They had been seated on a bench where the sharp wind struck them, and Haldrum felt that it was but a matter of minutes till the girl would leave him for the night, for the wind was momentarily higher.

"I must have heavier wraps," she said at last, and when they were again on deck, she spoke of what he thought.

"You wonder why I do not retire? You do not answer, but I know—I will tell you. In the face of the storm, how can I forget that a fight is on between Captain Monnican and the elements? I prefer, if I must be sleepless, to see rather than to imagine."

So they sat till the moments swelled themselves into great dark hours and until the flying spray swept in floods across the deck—then only did they retreat.

Twice Captain Monnican passed them in sedate haste, yet paused to volunteer to Miss Ball his confidence in the good ship.

It was late, very late when Beatrix Ball sought her stateroom, and then only from a belated sense of the proprieties. Her unvoiced anxiety had, however, been passed to Haldrum, and alone he kept up the vigil—alone, but happy. Wrapped in a storm coat, he watched till morning should have come. Instead, the monotonous sound of the fog signals gave little hope of a real morning. Besides, there were strange vibrations about the vessel—something more difficult and labored than the throbbing of the engines. Haldrum noticed that more people were stirring than seemed reasonable at the hour. He got up and walked below. There were officers expostulating with passengers.

"Not a word of truth to this rumor!" he heard the captain say. "I'd like to

lay my hands upon the man who started it!"

There was nothing excitable about Haldrum. What good would it do him to think that the officers were deceiving them? At any rate, they must do what they must; fear would help none. Yet if there were any danger, he mused further, he must get a warning to Miss Ball so that she might dress. He penciled a card to show the bare possibility of trouble impending, and found a maid who took charge of it; it was scarcely four in the morning, yet he seemed not to have disturbed the lady, for in a moment she entered the saloon, dressed.

"A crowd of lunatics have started the story that the boat is sinking, Miss Ball. It is my only excuse for disturbing you at this unearthly hour!"

"Not a matter of apologies at all, Mr. Haldrum: rather of gratitude! In such a case I might expect to be called; though I did think it would be by another!"

Haldrum scarcely understood; and so he silently led the way toward the deck.

"Your friend, Mr. Grimm, has not heard the alarm, I suppose," she suggested quietly.

Before Haldrum had answered, they stepped upon the deck and came full upon Grimm, a bundle wrapped in oil-skin in his hands, something bulging beneath his long coat. Grimm was evidently preparing for eventualities. He looked back, then hurried toward them.

"What, dressed so soon, Miss Ball? I was just starting down to offer you my services! They're using all the steam on the pumps—it's a bad sign! Looks to me that we are settling too low!"

"Bosh!" broke in Haldrum. "You can't see the water line, and you know it—and the doors are closed below! Just your imagination, this settling idea!" But Miss Ball paid no attention to his remark. It was entirely another phase of the affair which interested her. She looked severely at Grimm.

"You are too late!" she answered to his offer of assistance.

Just what she meant, Haldrum did

not understand. Had she sensed the unexpected, or did she refer to Haldrum's presence? At any rate, the sound of the labored pumping, or whatever it was, ceased suddenly, and the engines were heard slowly swinging into a proper pace in a fog.

Miss Ball turned again to Grimm, saying:

"One sometimes sees more clearly in a fog!" Then in a voice so low that Haldrum could not hear, she added: "Mr. Grimm, the black flag of the buccaneer must be hauled down!"

"The black flag? The black flag of the buccaneer?" repeated Grimm. "Is it a riddle, or what?"

But she had already turned away. Captain Monnican had come up to her and was smiling good-naturedly. "Some amateur navigator aboard, who thinks he knows a lot more about machinery than he does, caused this flurry. There was nothing in the world wrong!"

But Beatrix Ball seemed unconvinced, even when the fog cleared away and a bright new day ushered them into their port without a moment of delay.

Those were happy days for Stephen Haldrum which followed his return to the city. He had money enough to continue his studies, the chiefest of which was to answer that unsettled question, "What is the color of her eyes?" For Grimm, following that night on the boat, had enforced his claim to Haldrum's services with contracts, payments, and various requests for engineering information, in a manner quite satisfying to Haldrum. True, Grimm had driven a hard bargain, but that was the habit of a life-time; and if he exacted from Haldrum copies of plans and models of instruments having as yet no known commercial value, it was nothing more than Haldrum expected. On the other hand, Haldrum stood by his privileges. If the contract called for special reports on any engineering subject whatsoever, it specified no particular time for the completion thereof; and, with week following week, Cleaver Grimm went on his vacation before the most of these investigations had been fairly started. How could Stephen Haldrum differentiate integrals and solve

original problems in the handling of poly-phase currents when the demurely drooping eyes of Beatrix Ball stood always at the back of his recollection and her full lips and round cheeks in material form were but a few city blocks distant? In fact, when Grimm was well out of the city, I more than fear that Haldrum scarcely thought of him save when his wonder-conjuring name appeared again in the daily prints, as it had such a habit of doing. For the newspapers were still full of stock market raids which Grimm was conducting by wireless telegraph, of the splendor and magnificence of his private yacht, and finally of the weird and blood curdling experiences he had on the upper Lakes; but none of it excited interest with Haldrum, till vitalized by the concern felt by Beatrix Ball.

"The idea!" cried the maiden, as Stephen listened eagerly. "It is impossible—this idea that a yacht, swift and well-manned like Mr. Grimm's, could be overhauled by any unknown boat—and the utterly preposterous story that, in this day of orderly submission to the law, a private craft would ply its notorious traffic on the upper Lakes!"

"Oh," mused Stephen, awaking to interest, "I *did* see that story but took it to be no more than a story—a mere piece of personal advertising!"

"It would not have been advertising if it were false, instead of preposterous! In that event, it would have been in the line of Cleaver Grimm's business—which is the creating of discredited in business ventures in order to buy them in below value, or the spreading of glowing falsities to beguile the unwary into purchases at exorbitant figures."

"But this pirate story—how could anybody use that?"

"You forget what this will do for the Shipping Trust—and on the other hand, what it would do if it were merely false but plausible, to benefit the marine insurance companies! But that is the worst of it! It seems not to be false!"

Haldrum laughed.

"And you believe that there are real pirates on the Lakes—pirates of a sort different from the class of Cleaver Grimm himself?"

She leaned close to him as if to whisper a secret. It was the highest compliment a woman could pay, and Haldrum felt his heart grow warm with joy. "The Shipping Trust fears Cleaver Grimm," she said, "—as do half a dozen more great corporations. The spy they had among the crew of Grimm's yacht reported that he himself saw the pirate craft in the night time—saw the black flag with the skull and crossbones, which he knew he could not have mistaken; and worse than that, he saw the pirate captain receive the booty—the scoundrel was reasonable and took a sum of money that happened to be on board! And worse than that, my uncle was himself on board a Shipping Trust Steamer which was chased by the mysterious free-booter!"

"So Cleaver is a mere unit among those who are oppressed by pirates! A very fitting retribution for his pirate career!"

"Yes, but not so hard on Mr. Grimm as on the shipping interests, whose business has in three days absolutely disappeared! Even freight is going now by rail!"

In the midst of the discussion, a servant appeared.

"There's a long distance call for a Mr. Haldrum," the servant announced. "I've tried to assure the telephone people that no such man is here, but—"

"But there is! Show Mr. Haldrum to the telephone!"

Miss Ball had spoken decisively. Haldrum thought there was measured impatience in her voice—wondered if she objected to having his path traced to her door.

When Haldrum returned there was both impatience and regret showing from his eyes.

"This interruption is distressing to me, I assure you, Miss Ball. There are many things that I want to say—"

He paused a moment as if to give Beatrix Ball a chance to bid him say them, but she was impassive.

"There are things that I must say, but I have been summoned to go at once by rail to Mackinac and thence by boat to give a long delayed report to my employer, Mr. Cleaver Grimm—"

"Cleaver Grimm!"

If the girl had been startled from the well-bred composure which seemed an essential of her personality, she as quickly returned to normal repose.

"Yes, Cleaver Grimm!" he repeated.

"And why not?"

"Why not, indeed! No doubt Mr. Grimm's engineering demands are well rewarded; and with equal certainty they deserve ample compensation!"

"But my dear Miss Ball! Is there any reason—"

But now the girl laughed merrily, explaining: "I was merely surprised that you ever knew Mr. Grimm. Still, as I come to recall, it was Mr. Grimm to whom we are indebted for our acquaintance." And a few minutes later, Haldrum took his leave, for he must needs now hurry away and catch a north-bound train; otherwise the weekly boat connection at Mackinac would be lost.

At Mackinac Island, Haldrum was to take a night boat for the Grand Manitoulin. And at last, with a heart of vain regrets, he stood waiting at the Mackinac pier. His passage was secured and he was ready to meet his employer—ready and willing, for he was bound to terminate the connection which had so mysteriously aroused the animosity of his beloved.

"Mister H'd'm."

Haldrum started at the rough utterance of his name; and he started again when he saw the face beside him. Somehow, something flittered through his brain of a slumming trip he had once made, of "tough" Lake Front characters he had seen, and the like.

"My name is Haldrum!"

"And I'm Capt'n Teague—special charter party for your convenience! Rich old chap out on the Grand Manitoulin wants to make a nice trip for you. There's my outfit!"

Haldrum glanced at the big yacht flying the British jack. Its decks were wide and bare. Its name—*Sea Urchin*—scarcely discernible at a few yards distance, in such small letters was it painted.

"What rich old chap?"

"Come, come, ye mutt! No foolin' with Teague—ye understand?"

It was the wrong play for a man like Haldrum, but Teague did not realize it.

"Very well," said Haldrum, "I'll have to look for my stuff. It's already on the *Mononaquah*."

"Come along—I'll send for the stuff!"

"Captain Teague, is your hearing bad? I said that I would look after my stuff!"

Teague's under jaw shot forward, but he held his peace, and Haldrum hurried to the *Mononaquah*.

The night was falling, and from a thousand points, lights began to twinkle. Now and then there was a sullen roar—the whistle of the car ferries or of some wandering tramp from the west. If Teague had not suspected, he had but a few moments of uncertainty before Haldrum's design was evident; for lone passenger that he was, he stayed by the *Mononaquah*; and as that good boat pulled into the channel in the darkness, he thought he caught sight of Teague on the deck of the *Sea Urchin*. At any rate, there was a person stamping back and forth as if in a mighty rage.

Up the channel, past the frightful derelicts which mar the prospect at the Island's end, the *Mononaquah* held its course. In lack of company, Haldrum stood forward and now and then passed a word with the captain—but the captain had little to say in return. The gloom of the scene was upon him. The fitful shafts of light which now and then reached out, were like long, ghastly fingers of the night, giving to the air a blackness scarcely less deep and dreadful than the blackness of the channel waters.

"Captain, you are not holding the regular course!" You are not holding to Sault Ste Marie at all!"

"I have no control over the orders of the Company—if I had, I would not run this trip at all! Your passage calls for Manitowaning. I can't see why you care if we miss either the Soo, Thessalon or Gore Bay."

"I'm sure I don't care, Captain! What's the matter with your traffic?"

"Newspaper fairy stories, and the Company in a fright. I wish the real

owners were in command! We'd hold the course, and fix for fight, we would!"

"Who are the owners—Cleaver Grimm is one, isn't he?"

Once more, the name of Haldrum's patron seemed to have been his undoing; and finding that his only companion, the Captain, had suddenly ceased to be communicative, Haldrum wrapped a long coat about him and took a deck chair, where he made the gloom sadly joyful by dreaming of another night when he was not alone. Slowly the hours slipped away. It was one o'clock, or it might have been two. The breeze blew shrilly from the west, like on that other night, and yet though there were few stars to be seen, Haldrum thought the chance of storm was small. Suddenly he thought he saw a haze of light reach out across the sky. In a moment he knew he was mistaken. Peering across the prow, he saw a light speck in the night. He stepped toward the wheel-house, where for hours the captain had stood.

"Captain, what is that off to the right—the Great Duck?"

"The Great Duck's fifty miles away."

"But what is it?"

"If you find out, I'd like to know myself!"

The speck lightened. It was a vessel equipped with a searchlight. The captain used his glasses in the hope that the light would fall athwart the stranger's own deck. Then the officer swore, and even in the dark Haldrum knew it was no formal expression.

"Captain, this is no common thing—this starboard apparition. Have the passengers no rights?"

The captain said never a word to Haldrum, but thrust the glasses in his hands, and turned to the man at the wheel.

"Twist 'er tail, Sargent, and be quick! Freebooter or fakir, our orders are to show a clean pair of heels! But the devil take those scoundrels. I'd like a chance to use my own judgment!"

As Haldrum held the Captain's glasses, the stranger's lights again fell across her own decks. She was running in a rough water, the spray shimmering in the light above the forward deck rails. But that was not strange, for she

was very low, unlike any frequenter of the Upper Lakes. Amazedly, Haldrum rubbed his eyes. There was a turret—a gun-turret, such as the Great Lakes did not know; and as the flash turned, Haldrum saw her flag—the skull and bones of white, though he could not see whether there was black for background.

"Grimm's pirate, by the holy stars!" he exclaimed.

"Grimm's?"

"The one the papers told about."

"Oh—well, if I'm drunk on duty, all the passengers are the same!" the captain returned, now more cheerful than he had been since they set out. Haldrum handed back the glasses. He was in a deep study.

"Captain," he said at last, "what's right off in there?"

"Cockburn Island, and a little east, Mississequa Channel! Why?"

"Take my advice and pull for it!"

"Why?"

"To end this pirate game."

"But how?"

"Why, you jump whenever I mention Grimm's name, and I am to meet Grimm at Manitowaning!"

The captain never answered. The steamer swung about, and under full steam, put back along her course. The stranger was hard after, but a long way astern. Her funnels now blazed fire, but she slowly fell behind; and finally disappeared. Then Haldrum saw that he was now under surveillance! His kindly suggestion had marked him as a conspirator.

In the morning, when the clear sun out of a clear sky had driven from all channels the gloom and mystery which gave plausibility to the tale of lake pirates sailing a craft never built on the lakes and never brought through any of the entering waterways, the *Mononaquah* hung again at its pier, and beside it, calm and deserted, lay the *Sea Urchin*. On board the *Mononaquah*, the wireless had long been sputtering angrily. Instinctively, Haldrum connected that memory with the vague expectancy which had been manifest in the faces of the *Mononaquah's* officers. Presently, in the direction of St. James, a patch of

smoke grew till it had whirled itself into the stately figure of the great *Minotaur*, finest craft of the Shipping Trust.

The captain of the *Mononaquah* had lost all speech for Haldrum, and gazed in voiceless anger at all his questions. Below, Haldrum found a lookout off duty who was more considerate.

"The *Minotaur*? Why, she's bringing in the real owners! Perhaps the general manager will get a little sand!" At that point the captain appeared. After they had spoken secretly, even the lookout gazed with suspicion at Haldrum, who turned again to the deck and the dock—where he bought the newest papers available. And what a mass of news they contained! Pages about the pirate, columns about the purchase in open markets of Shipping Trust stock, and paragraphs of an interview given by Cleaver Grimm on the subject of lake pirates, wherein was condemned the inaction of two great nations, the cowardice of the shipping interests and the fear of the public—which fear had in less than a week practically closed the traffic of the lakes, a feat not for a moment accomplished by the great storms of a short time past! But, from the despatch, Cleaver Grimm was near Isle Royale, for the message had been sent from Port Arthur, hundreds of miles from Manitowaning! In his wrath, Haldrum swore at those who had tricked him away from his beloved on a false message! Before the thunder of his wrath had ceased to reverberate, the *Minotaur* was tying at its dock, and on the deck, the sight which first attracted him was the trim figure of Beatrix Ball! In an instant, he knew that there was no obligation to seek Cleaver Grimm further—he would travel with the *Minotaur*.

Once on board the latter ship, Haldrum found packages looking little like the merchandise of peace; moreover, there was no booking of passengers. The regular runs of the boat had been canceled, and the destination was unknown. At last he found Beatrix Ball, who received him coolly.

"Whither bound, Miss Ball?"

"On a private charter-party of the *Minotaur*. I am with some friends."

"You are going to hunt the pirates?"

"I am going with the *Minotaur*."

"If this boat goes to hunt the pirates, I want a chance to volunteer."

"The *Sea Urchin* is at your service, I hear! No doubt you will be in close proximity."

The girl's tone brought Haldrum anguish; but he bided his time. "I have nothing to do with the *Sea Urchin*," he answered. Will you not present my offer to your friends in command?"

"The friends in command would refuse the aid of foes, no matter by whom recommended! Good morning, Mr. Haldrum."

A man of Stephen Haldrum's temperament will hazard much for vindication. When the *Minotaur*, its state-rooms full of marines, that night began to skirt the Grand Manitoulin, with a search-light of its own peering unavailingly over its own fresh-mounted machine-guns, its own engines running like Swiss watches, a smooth shaven young man that day employed in haste had doffed the clothing of steamer service, donned the raiment of Stephen Haldrum, and slipped forward to the place where once he had sat with Beatrix Ball. In the darkness he was uncertain, but hopeful.

"Pardon the intrusion, Miss Ball—"

She turned. She could not well see his face and might have questioned her sight, but her hearing was good beyond doubt.

"Mr. Haldrum, how dare you—"

She had risen angrily.

"Pray give me a moment—once you did not fear to listen to me here, and I swear I have never since betrayed your confidence! Am I not justly entitled to a chance for explanation?"

She sank again to the chair, but only in the name of fair dealing.

"Miss Ball, when I was summoned away from your house, I was interrupted. I had come with but one purpose in mind—to tell you that I loved you! And I love you now! Devotedly, absolutely, and better than life or reputation, or even than knowledge!"

"You dare to talk of love, and yet you conspire with Cleaver Grimm against me!"

"Believe me, till a few hours ago I

did not know that you were in any way interested in shipping or I might have dared less—you did not even tell me that night in the storm! I am not in the service of Cleaver Grimm, but in your service—I signed papers with the *Minotaur* to-day, that I might tell you myself what I believe about this whole business!"

The girl looked through the darkness toward where he sat.

"A few hours ago, I might have felt so differently; but a traitor—oh, how could you do such things?"

Suddenly, far to the east, there appeared the same apparition which Haldrum had seen once before—a turreted vessel bearing down upon them! Instantly the boat *Minotaur* was in a well-ordered commotion; signals, warnings, commands, the placing of all hands, following quickly and yet with precision. In the hurry and tumult, Haldrum talked, and rapidly, too, as he told the story of his connection with Cleaver Grimm, of all the services performed, down to his refusal to go aboard the *Sea Urchin*.

"—Which everyone believes is really the pirate boat—some contrivance put over it to hide its harmless nature."

"Dear Beatrix, it was Cleaver Grimm who broke faith, not I! And if you follow my suggestions, you shall hoist the scoundrel on his own gallows! That is but a phantom yonder, or I can't read the signs!"

The captain had his hands full in the moment of alarm. The two craft were drawing closer, each under full head of steam; the stranger's own search-lights showed up her guns, her decks crowded with men, and finally the same ghastly ensign of the long-passed day of carnage in the high seas. Alongside the captain stood another, Mr. Silliman, general manager of the line. Somehow Silliman was vastly uneasy when he saw that Miss Ball had an adviser.

"There's no use running foul of that vessel and getting ourselves sunk in 800 feet of water," said he. "Besides! I've told them to turn about without firing a shot, if you approve! This is no man-of-war!"

"But I do not approve! Do what you came here to do!"

"You mean fire till we see whether the enemy is really armored—and when we find that it is, retreat!"

"If we find it is," corrected the girl. "But, Mr. Silliman, I cannot understand your timidity! The captains all say that this armoring must be imitation—that an ironclad flying machine is the only thing ironclad which can get in this lake without their knowledge."

"Don't you fear it, Miss Ball!"

"Of course she doesn't," spoke up Haldrum, interfering now where he had no business, lest Silliman should attack him first. "Of course, Miss Ball does not fear a painted ship on a painted ocean! The quicker you get in range and open fire, the quicker you'll see!" Silliman turned angrily away. This fellow had no business on the *Minotaur* and he knew too much at that!

"Miss Ball," continued Haldrum, "I'll venture that this pirate business is making as much money for your manager, Mr. Silliman, as for Cleaver Grimm. Its purpose is not what you think—not the control of the Shipping Trust! Miss Ball, Mr. Grimm was recently a suitor of yours?"

"And what if he were?"

"Why, just this: that sea-apparition over there is made possible by means of my discoveries, as I believe! Cleaver Grimm knew that in a civilized country this thing could last but a few days; and even then there must be a scapegoat! In this case, the scapegoat was important! I was to be decoyed on the *Sea Urchin*. It is manned with wharf rats and thugs, and its captain is a gunman from the river. Will you have the wireless ask if the *Sea Urchin* did not leave port?"

"Not necessary—I knew that it followed us hours ago."

"Miss Ball, the *Sea Urchin* was to be captured, its crew were to swear ignorance of the unlawful purposes of the enterprise, and that I had commanded them. After that I would be out of the way of Cleaver Grimm—my own fine discovery would convict me!"

A shot rang out from the *Minotaur*. It fell short. Another—but it did the same!

"Don't let them do that! Silliman isn't square! Go tell those gunners to

hit if they can! Silliman doesn't dare let them hit!"

Somehow, for once in her life, Beatrix Ball obeyed commands. The guns rang out; the smoke cleared—and the pirate was uninjured! Not a scratch or a trace of broken glass! Even the men still unconcernedly crowded the deck.

"Proved!" cried Silliman. "An armored boat!"

"Proved!" shouted Haldrum! "A phantom boat! Let us run it down and prove that it is nothing but a moving picture—a mechanical, artificial mirage made possible by my own electrical discoveries! That over yonder, out of sight, Cleaver Grimm's men are throwing one sort of rays against a stratum of a different sort. This is but a motion picture done in high vibrations on an atmospheric screen miles away! It's a clever piece of work, handled from behind that island in the north! Miss Ball, if the captain will give me a chance to compute angles and to use the wireless equipment, we will locate these two boats quickly! The *Sea Urchin* is out of vision back of us—the other is off to the north."

"Captain, you have heard!"

Miss Ball's voice was peremptory. Mr. Silliman was vainly protesting, but as they tacked at Haldrum's request, sharply to the south, the pirate suddenly disappeared! It was spook-like and terrible! Only Haldrum was unconcerned! And now to the north, the vision all came back again! They had crossed the electrified screen and crossed back!

There then followed a chase which took the last ounce of coal and the last particle of ingenuity on board the *Minotaur*, but when night again fell, there was evidence against Cleaver Grimm which would convict him of conspiracy to defraud, and the phantom pirates had been wiped forever from the Upper Lakes.

Again two sat in the gloom, watch-the spray at the fore.

"Say that you love me! Say at least that I am vindicated!" the man was whispering.

"Dear Stephen!" slowly whispered the girl. It was all, but enough.



Ten Clear Havanas

By **FRANK X. FINNEGAN**

WHEN old man Terhune's will was opened and read, a few days after that estimable citizen had been laid away in a grassy corner of the family plot at Forest Hill, his scapegrace son Thomas, sole survivor of the Terhune's, received the surprise of his life. He had been waiting with rather indecent impatience for the conclusion of the preliminaries, that he might get his hands on the money which had been so rigorously withheld from him by the stern and sorrowing old merchant, whose heart he had broken years before. He was the only heir—it was all to be his at last—and he chafed over the slow and methodical movements of old Merriwether, his father's lawyer, who not only took his own good time about opening the will, but calmly ignored the broad hints of Thomas for a slight advance pending the settlement of the estate.

At last the day came and in the presence of old man Terhune's former partner, with the expectant heir and a few of the latter's interested creditors assembled in the family parlor, old Merriwether broke the seals on the envelope that held the document, and looked over his glasses at the little company.

"I may say before reading this will," he said, "that it is quite unusual in form, but at the same time, it is perfectly legal. It was drawn by myself at the direction of the late Mr. Terhune; and that there might be no question as

to its standing in court after he passed away, he submitted it in person to the Judge of the Probate Court who assured him that it would stand every test."

A slight feeling of uneasiness manifested itself on the flushed face of young Mr. Terhune and communicated itself to the interested creditors. There was more than a hint in the solemn manner of old Merriwether that all was not well, and Thomas found himself clutching the arms of his chair and wondering what was coming next.

"This is the will," continued the lawyer, clearing his throat:

"Inasmuch as my son Thomas, my only heir, has shown himself incapable of being trusted with money and has repeatedly disappointed me in his promises to reform, shun his evil associations and abandon his dissolute habits of drinking and smoking, I, William Terhune, being of sound mind, have made such disposition of my estate as I think best calculated to bring about that reform, with the assistance of my attorney-at-law, Joshua Merriwether, whom I hereby appoint sole executor; and my said heir, Thomas Terhune, can participate in the estate only upon condition that he follows out to the letter the instructions I have left with the said Joshua Merriwether, which are not to be revealed to my son except as provided in the said instructions. And in case Thomas Terhune fails or refuses

to abide by these conditions, I hereby bequeath my entire estate to the said Joshua Merriwether.'"

The lawyer stopped and Thomas was on his feet in an instant, his jaw thrust out pugnaciously.

"What's all this about?" he demanded. "Where's the money? I'm not going to be tied up with any conditions and instructions—I want that coin!"

"The will is duly signed and witnessed," went on Merriwether suavely and without noticing the objections of the disgruntled heir, "and I will file it for probate to-day. I think it will be admitted without delay and if you will call at my office to-morrow, Mr. Terhune, we will—ah—make the next move."

Young Terhune raved around for a while and swore he would go to law to have the crazy will of an insane old man broken; but the lawyer quietly gathered up his papers and went away with old man Terhune's former partner; the disgusted creditors stamped out of the house one by one, to figure on a new way of getting their money, and Thomas, gradually calming down, decided things might not be so bad as they looked, after all. The money was there and he was going to get it, even if he had to pull the wool over old Merriwether's eyes about turning over a new leaf.

The next day he presented himself at the lawyer's office, tingling with curiosity about the conditions of his legacy and ready to promise anything. Merriwether met him solemnly.

"Mr. Terhune," he said, "I was instructed by your late father, in connection with the will you heard yesterday, to give you this, the first time you called on me with reference to your legacy."

And reaching into a drawer of the desk he produced a small, oblong box, which he handed to the astonished young man. Thomas took it eagerly and tore off the wrappings. In it he found a sealed letter addressed to himself—and an ordinary clear Havana cigar enclosed in a small glass tube.

"What's this?" he demanded, looking at the cigar with a puzzled frown.

"I believe the letter will explain," said the lawyer blandly.

Terhune hastily ripped the envelope and took out a letter written in his father's familiar cramped hand. With growing anger and consternation he read:

MY DEAR THOMAS:

You have disappointed me so often in your promises to give up drinking and smoking and dissolute companions that I have almost despaired of your ever accomplishing a genuine reform and becoming a useful citizen; for that reason I realize that it would be worse than folly to give you any large amount of money at this time. However, in my despair, I have thought out a plan which may work for your salvation. In the first place, I want you to give up drinking and smoking immediately and forever. The other reforms will follow naturally, if you do this. Then I want you to take this cigar and *keep it*—put it somewhere about your room where it will be ever before you as a reminder of your promise and a test of your moral strength. Mr. Merriwether has nine more cigars just like it. You are to get one of them from him each month and keep all of them until one year from the date of my death. They will be a constant temptation to you to break your resolution—I realize that, and I intend that you shall fight the battle under those conditions. When there is no temptation there is no strength in virtue. I wish I could devise a plan whereby you could also be reminded of your promise to shun liquor, but the ten cigars will have to answer both purposes. At the end of one year, if you bring the cigars intact to Mr. Merriwether as an evidence that you have kept your promise and really reformed, he has instructions as to the next step. My final hope is that my plan may succeed.

YOUR FATHER.

Young Terhune threw the letter on the desk in disgust.

"So that's it, eh?" he said derisively. "I'm not to have a drink or a smoke for a year, and in the meantime I don't get a cent! I suppose this was your brilliant suggestion!"

"The entire idea was your father's," said the lawyer stiffly. "I am merely obeying his instructions, as I am bound to do under the law as executor of the estate."

A sudden thought flashed across the young fellow's mind, and his attitude changed. Picking up the letter and tucking the cigar and its glass tube carefully into his pocket, he rose to go.

"Very well, Mr. Merriwether," he

said. "I will do my best to carry out my father's wishes. This is a blamed odd situation, but I suppose he was right, after all. I *have* been a little bit wild and I suppose money would slip through my fingers like sand, but I'm going to put all that behind me now. You will see me a month from to-day, when I will call for the next cigar of this queer lot; and I'll bring them all back to you at the end of a year."

"I hope so," said Merriwether drily. "Good afternoon, Mr. Terhune."

When Thomas reached the street, he drew out the precious cigar, examined it carefully, sniffed it with an expert nose and then smiled with satisfaction.

"Soft!" he murmured to himself. "I can get those anywhere." Whereupon he calmly bit the end off it, applied the match to the other end and smoked it to its clammy finish with great satisfaction, stowing away the little glass tube for future service.

Also he indefinitely postponed the reform movement that was to have been inaugurated that day and maintained for a year. Through force of circumstances, principally the closing of his father's purse-strings some years before, he had been forced to ally himself with a grain brokerage house in the capacity of settling clerk, and he spent in that service just as few hours as were necessary in order to draw the stipend that placated the more importunate of his creditors. In his spare time, he continued to shake dice with the boys for the cigars and he spent just as many midnight hours as ever, frowning at a red and a black seven and wondering why in thunder he couldn't draw another one once in a while.

At the expiration of the month, Thomas was promptly on hand in Merriwether's office, shaved, spruced and decorous looking, and the old lawyer handed him another little oblong box without comment or cross-examination. This one contained only the cigar in its glass tube and no letter of instructions—evidently the plan was expected to be in complete working order by that time. It chanced that he was fairly well stocked with cigars that day and he kept the legacy on his dresser as a sort of souvenir for nearly a week. Every

time he looked at it he grinned; and at last, one evening when he came home early by mistake, he found himself without a smoke just before bed-time. Without a qualm he plucked the clear Havana from its tube, settled himself in an easy chair and watched it fade into blue smoke and ashes while he pondered on how much Merriwether had in trust for him and figured on what he would do with it. His first decision was for an automobile—in fact, he had expected to be dashing around in a noisy red car long before that time—and would have been, he told himself, had it not been for his father and Merriwether getting their fool heads together and tying him up with their crazy conditions and cigars and reform propositions. At which painful reflection, he viciously threw away the stump of the cigar and went to bed.

Life went along thus in the same old rut for Mr. Terhune during the greater part of the year following the old man's passing; regularly the young gentleman appeared in Merriwether's office for his monthly cigar and it was handed to him with all the solemnity of a court procedure. Never once did the lawyer presume to ask if he was living up to his promises of reform—there was some slight consolation in that, and Thomas told himself that the *dénouement* at the end of the year ought to be easy for an accomplished actor like himself. He did not always consume the clear Havana legacies immediately upon securing them. At one time he had a fantastic notion of keeping a lot of them for Merriwether as he had been instructed to do, and he accumulated as many as four in his rooms. But a merry little poker party interfered with his virtuous plan—his friends discovered they were all out of smokes at an unholy hour when every shop was closed, and like the generous host that he was, Terhune hauled out the fragrant Havanas in their protecting glass cases and handed them around amid general acclaim for his taste and prodigality.

Shortly before the year was up, he bethought himself of the necessity for filling up the tubes before presenting himself to Merriwether with the proofs of his regeneration; and with that

month's cigar for a sample, he visited his tobacconist.

"Have you got a cigar like this, Jerry?" he asked nonchalantly of the dealer. The expert took the smoke and glanced at it once.

"Sure," he said "—thousands of 'em."

"Well, I only want nine just now," explained Terhune. "It's a little special stunt. Put 'em in these glass tubes, will you?"

And laying the glasses on the showcase, he lighted the sample and puffed joyously while he watched the filling of the tubes and contemplated in prospect the undoing of Brother Merriwether.

"Just like the old fossil," he thought as he started for the law office with his packet of cigars carefully stowed in his pocket. "It never occurred to him that I could smoke 'em and fill these again."

It was the anniversary of old man Terhune's death and the lawyer was waiting for the eager heir. The last cigar had not been called for and when Thomas entered, a little flushed with excitement, but carefully free from anything more stimulating, Merriwether laid the little box before him. Thomas took out the cigar and smiled genially.

"Well, this is the big day," he said. "I've hung onto those cigars like grim death, I tell you, and they're all here."

He drew out the package the tobacconist had given him and dumped the nine Havanas before the lawyer. Merriwether looked at them solemnly.

"The seals are broken," he observed. Terhune started nervously. He hadn't thought of that.

"Oh, yes," he said with ready mendacity. "A party of friends I had up did that—I told 'em about the cigars and they wanted to smell 'em and blamed it if they didn't break every seal before I knew what they were doing. It's too bad, but the cigars are there, all right."

"I see," said Mr. Merriwether. "And now I must perform a duty that is—ah—rather painful and distasteful to me. I am obliged, under my instructions, Mr. Terhune, to ask you if you have—ah—kept the promises your father asked you to make."

"Sure!" avowed Thomas readily. "Nary drink for a year—don't know what a cigar tastes like any more and don't want to. And now what? I don't mind telling you, Merriwether, I'm anxious to get a feel of that money!"

The lawyer opened a locked drawer in his desk and took out a long blue envelope marked in the elder Terhune's handwriting. He held it out for the young fellow's inspection.

"You see what that says—in your father's writing?" he demanded.

"'Instructions to Mr. Merriwether,'" read Thomas. "'When my son Thomas returns the ten cigars.' Yes—that's all right! Go ahead and see what it says!"

Merriwether opened the envelope with exasperating deliberation. A single slip of paper fell into his hand on which was scrawled: "'Open them!'" Merriwether held the paper out to Terhune.

"Open them!" the young man exclaimed. "Why, what the—"

Mr. Merriwether had picked up a keen steel ink eraser with one hand and the tenth cigar with the other. With a quick motion he slit it from end to end and from its odorous interior he drew a crumpled yellow bill with the figures "1000" stamped on its corners. Thomas keeled over weakly against the desk while Mr. Merriwether calmly tucked the bill into his own pocket.

"Hey! What's that?" yelled Terhune. "Did you—is that—money?"

"Most decidedly," snapped the lawyer; and as he spoke he reached for another cigar and ripped it open. Only clear Havana filler rewarded his search and he looked up sternly into the blanched face of Mr. Terhune.

"These are not the cigars you took away from here!" he said decisively. One by one he was snapping them in his fingers while the heir stared and tried to collect his thoughts. The game was over—he saw there was no use in playing any more cards.

"No, they're not," he said shakily. "Do you mean to say that every one of those cigars had a thousand dollar bill—holy smoke!" he concluded as he saw Merriwether's head steadily nodding assent.

"Then you didn't swear off smoking," asserted the lawyer.

"No, I didn't," he admitted, "but that last bill is still good—I didn't burn that one up. Let's have it."

"Not at all," Merriwether coldly retorted. "Remember, if you failed or refused to carry out the provisions of your father's will to the very letter, the estate was to go to me. You certainly have failed—you even admit it without this proof on my desk. This thousand dollar bill is therefore incontestably mine."

"All right—keep it!" stormed the indignant heir. "I don't want any measly

thousand dollars, anyhow. Where's the rest of the estate? What about that?"

Mr. Merriwether sighed and unconsciously patted his vest pocket where the big yellow bill reposed.

"There is no residue of your father's estate," he said softly. "Six months before his death, he deeded all of it, except \$10,000, to the Society For The Suppression of Smoke. And most of that ten thousand," he added, "has evidently gone toward perfuming your apartment. Good afternoon, Mr. Terhune."

The Meekness of Otto Paulsen

By PHILIP R. KELLAR

OTTO PAULSEN," Red Dick Hogan cried in shrill anger, "you are nothing but a chicken-livered, pig-headed, water-blooded Dutchman! And I hope you'll have spunk to resent that and hit me!"

"Yah," returned Paulsen phlegmatically, "I'll say something. I say it is the time for us to quit. We are no good together. Three years we've been partners trying to make that old prospect hole into a gold mine. We will part. After breakfast I go and leave the Little Ruby to you and Margie. Gold mining is no good."

Red Dick, taken aback by his partner's declaration of independence, stared wonderingly at him a few seconds; then, his temper at fever heat, he laughed derisively.

"I reckon you'll take to logging, eh," he said sneeringly. "You can make your two bones a day at that, anyhow."

"And that will be more than I've made digging for gold," Otto retorted calmly. "Only I think I'll be a forest ranger."

Whereupon Red Dick's sarcastic mirth increased. The idea of the slow

moving, slow thinking, mild mannered Paulsen in a position that required such mental quickness and physical courage and strength combined, seemed ludicrous.

Both were American born, but Paulsen had inherited the big body and strength and stolidity of his Teutonic ancestors, and Red Dick Hogan, small, tough, wiry, had the quick temper, the fast burning anger, and the love of a ruction that his Irish forbears had possessed.

They had been partners for three years, and every day of that time, while persistently hoping that their prospect, which Red Dick had named the Little Ruby, would turn into a real gold mine, they had quarreled, and always over some inconsequential thing. The quarreling had always been one-sided, for Otto Paulsen never had answered back until this morning—when he questioned Dick's assertion that the coffee should be stirred, Otto insisting that the boiling would do the stirring and save the human labor.

The cumulative effect of disappointed hopes and constant bickerings, audible

on one side, verbal on the other, had worn down through their store of patience, of which Red Dick possessed a goodly quantity despite his irascible and argumentative nature.

Paulsen did not resent the smiles and sneers and open laughter of his partner, and when the breakfast was finished, began methodically to pack his personal belongings. Red Dick watched him with increasing irritation. When the pack was tied up and Otto had taken a farewell glance at the mine shaft on the mountain side and was ready to say good-by, Dick cried:

"Say, Otto Paulsen, you aint going to leave me without taking a good licking along with you. I've been promising you one every day for three years, on account of all the back talk you never gave me, and I'm going to keep my promise."

He rolled up his sleeve. His motherless daughter, ten-year-old Margie, came down from the spring and looked wonderingly at them.

"Naw," Otto said with a heavy shaking of his head. "I will not fight you, Dick. I do not believe it is the good thing to fight for nothing. I am a meek man."

"Bah," Hogan retorted, "you're a coward!"

Margie put her hand in her father's and reached with the other hand to Otto. Paulsen, though to others he seemed twice as old as his twenty-six years counted, had always seemed to Margie to be nearly her own age.

"No, Daddy," she said firmly, "Otto isn't a coward."

She calmed Red Dick's anger and he explained the cause of the quarrel and the reason for Otto's pack. Margie seemed startled. She tried to persuade Otto not to go, but the man shook his head stubbornly. The time had come, he insisted. Hogan flared up again.

"Otto Paulsen," he cried, "you wouldn't fight for anything."

"Maybe," Otto replied gently. "I hope you and Margie find the mother vein. Good-by."

He slung the pack to his back and started up the canyon, but stopped after a few steps when Margie called to him. The little girl ran and put her arms

about his neck, and Red Dick, muttering an oath, hurried into the cabin. One of the reasons he hated his partner was because Margie and he were such good playmates, while there was always an air of restraint in her attitude towards himself.

So that was the way the oddly assorted trio parted, and Red Dick was so angry that he vented his spite on the granite walls of the mine shaft, pushing it into the mountain three feet further in the next week.

Two months afterwards a prospector stopped at the cabin and retailed the news of Otto's appointment as a guard in the National Forest Service. Red Dick was surprised until he recalled that Paulsen, for all his apparent dullness, possessed a big store of woodcraft, accumulated by his methodical, painstaking manner through the years he had passed in the forest. Six months after the quarrel over the coffee, Paulsen was a Ranger, with a large district under his control, the boundary of which reached nearly to the Little Ruby mine.

One morning in the latter part of August, when the grass and pine needles were dry and brittle, the air was heavy and there was a prophetic whiff of coming fires in the wind, Paulsen stopped at the cabin. He was making his ceaseless, unending rounds, watching for fires, keeping a sharp lookout for abandoned camps, burning cigar stumps, and other evidences of reckless tourists, hunters and prospectors.

Red Dick stood in the doorway, watching him ride up and wondering if he had repented his bargain and was coming to claim half the mine.

"Hey Dick," Paulsen said calmly, "there's a fire broke out over at the foot of the Yorda range, and it's running fast. I got twenty men fighting it but need as many more. Call for volunteers! Get over as quick as you can, with as many blankets and picks and spades as you can carry. I'll round up more men. No time to lose!"

He did not even wait for a reply, and his pony was disappearing around a boulder across the trail before Dick recovered from his surprise at having

Otto give him orders. A flush of anger reddened his tanned cheeks, but he quickly realized the danger of a general fire with the forest in such a tinder-like condition, and immediately began to obey the commands. He was busy collecting the fire fighting implements when Margie joined him. She had met Otto up the trail.

"Otto says it's bad," the girl remarked excitedly, "and that I'd better scoot over into the valley."

"Otto's a coward," Red Dick growled. "He's afraid of a little forest fire. There aint any danger here and you stay and have something ready for us to eat to-night. We'll be hungry."

"But Otto says—"

"And I say that Otto's a coward!" Red Dick said sharply. "Don't talk back."

They finished the packing in silence and Dick started up the west side of the canyon. The Yorda range was the first one to the west, with a rather shallow and narrow canyon between it and the range, at the foot of which nestled the cabin. Two hundred feet from the cabin, up the other slope a few feet from the bottom, was the mine shaft. On the other side of the crest of that hill was "the valley," in which were forty or fifty settlers and a small village. The slope down the valley was gentle, thickly timbered, with a deep accumulation of dry pine needles on the ground. The wind was blowing steadily from the west, at a rate that would push the fire rapidly up the Yorda crest, slowly down the slope to the cabin, quickly across the canyon and up the other side, and then very rapidly down the gentle slope upon the settlers.

So Hogan, knowing the dangerous potentialities, hurried as rapidly as his load would permit, but he had been with the fire fighters only a few minutes before Otto arrived with five men and the cheering information that fifteen more would come shortly.

"Did Margie tell you what I said about going to the valley?" Otto asked Red Dick, after he had distributed his fresh men along the fighting line.

"Yes," Hogan replied shortly, "but she didn't go."

"You're foolish," Otto commented.

"I'm not a coward, though," Dick flared back, "and neither is Margie."

"She's got some sense," Otto said without resentment, "—enough sense to break for the shaft if the fire gets too close."

He walked away without waiting for Dick's answer. All through the day they fought the flames—stubbornly contested every foot, stamping out with their blankets the sparks that flew ahead of the red monster, throwing up earthen barricades where the ground was not too rocky, occasionally back-firing, though the conditions were unfavorable for this method and their efforts profited them little.

Otto Paulsen lumbered up and down the long, thin line of his soldiers, giving orders here and there with a meek gentleness that made Red Dick swear, sometimes under his breath, sometimes aloud. And yet, though Paulsen seemed to think and move slowly, he was always at the right spot at the right time, always working, working, working, with a patient fixity that maddened Hogan.

They were driven back slowly, foot by foot, yard by yard, up the mountain, and at sundown they were making their stand on the crest of the range. The wind had freshened but still blew with the steadiness that gave swift wings to smoke and flames and burning sparks.

A long stretch of rocky, treeless ground near the crest gave them a respite. Paulsen let them rest fifteen minutes, then put them into the fight again and in half an hour it seemed that they had conquered the fire. Only a few trees spluttered here and there, but these were a safe distance from the unburned trees along the top of the range.

The tired men hunted for smoother places and stretched out on their backs to sleep an hour before returning to their homes or their regular positions. Only Paulsen remained awake, alert, watchful. Red Dick was snoring, asleep at his feet, when Otto looked down the unburned side into the Little Ruby canyon and sprang up with a start of dismay. Through the fast darkening twilight, he saw a red flame lick its way

around the base of the mountain, through the gap, towards the cabin. He kicked Red Dick's ribs.

"Wake up," he called gruffly, "and get down to the cabin. The fire's coming up the canyon."

Hogan was on his feet instantly, and in ten seconds was racing down the mountain. Half a minute later the others were following him, as rapidly as Paulsen could arouse them and explain the situation. It required nearly half an hour for him to arouse them all. They would be trapped, the fire on all sides, unless they could beat the flames to the bottom and up the other side of the canyon.

Half-way down he saw that the cabin was doomed, despite the desperate efforts of the men to stop the fire's passage up the narrow valley. The red light glared on the men and made them seem like black figures in a fantastic dance. When he reached the cabin Margie was standing at the front, wrapped in a wet blanket, clasping her big doll in her arms. It was her most cherished possession. The men were falling back by twos and threes and fours.

Otto put his arm protectingly about Margie. Her father came up, panting for breath, gasping and coughing with the heat and smoke in his lungs. A cry from one of the men told that the fire had broken over the crest at the upper end of the canyon and was racing towards them from that direction. A sudden swirl of wind caught up a flaming torch and tossed it far up the other side. Almost instantly a big blaze flamed up from the spot where it fell. It spread rapidly and before they realized their danger they were practically hemmed in. They huddled about the cabin, loath to leave the cool stream that flowed directly in front of it, but Otto's voice, suddenly grown tense, stern and sharp, aroused them.

"Hey, you fools," he cried, "don't stay here, unless you want to be roast pigs. To the mine shaft. It's our only chance."

He half-carried, half-dragged Margie, and led them, his slowness disappearing as he went over the rough ground at breath-consuming speed. At

the mouth of the shaft he stopped, pushed the girl in and waited patiently until the last of his men had arrived, counting them methodically.

He pushed the last one in and followed on his heels. The fire was less than fifty feet away.

Otto drove them back into the shaft as far as he could, but even then the front row was dangerously close to the opening. He snatched one of the wet blankets and stretched it across the mouth, fastening it with picks.

Not a man spoke; they obeyed him instantly, unquestioningly. He made the biggest one lift Margie onto a little ledge near the rear, lest she be crushed. Red Dick started to object but Otto's quick order cut short his words.

In less than a minute the hot air began to push the blanket in and Otto placed his foot on the lower edge to hold it. A minute later and the flames had scorched through it, dried it out and it began to burn. Otto drew it down and quickly put another in its place. Five times in ten minutes this operation was repeated. The air in the shaft grew close and hot; smoke began to push in, and then the fumes and gases from the burning pine needles.

In the midst of their coughing and choking, five men, made desperate by their suffering, surged towards the opening, demanding to be let out. They would make a break for the creek. Otto said they could not and they rushed at him. The big, meek Paulsen turned his back to the hot blanket and met their rush. Two of them he felled with a pick handle. Two more fell before his fists. He saw that others were catching the panic fever and he drew his revolver and pointed it at them.

"The first man that tries to get past me," he said sternly, "will get a bullet through him."

They stopped. The men he had knocked down arose slowly, coughing, choking, their eyes red with tears of pain.

"Aint you got any sense?" Otto continued. "You got no chance to get through alive. You got a chance if you stay here. I got you into this and I'll see that you get out."

"Hoopla!"

The cry came from Red Dick Hogan. Maddened by suffering, he caught Margie down from her perch and started with her towards Otto, his eyes blazing wrathfully.

"Out of the way, you liver-hearted Dutchman," he cried. "I'm going out of here and take my girl with me. Out of my way, I say!"

Otto waited patiently, doggedly. When Red Dick was almost on him, he stepped forward, caught Hogan's nose and gave it a sharp twist. His other hand caught Hogan's shoulder and whirled him around, and the toe of his heavy boot helped Dick's progress back into the shaft.

"You stay back there, Red Dick Hogan," Otto said grimly, "or I'll bring you up here and sit on you."

In the interval the blanket had caught fire and blazed up quickly. Tom Bunker, one of the young men, frantically rushed for the opening, eluded Otto's clutch, and dashed out through the flames. Another tried to follow, but Otto's revolver rang out and the man fell back, with a bullet in his leg. The others retreated sullenly. Otto snatched up another blanket, but it was only slightly damp, and it scorched quickly. Again he tried it, but the blankets lasted so short a time that he could not fasten them, and with his bare hands he held them in place, the heat piercing through them and searing his skin until they could almost see it shrivel.

The men began to drop to the floor, unconscious. Red Dick stood against the wall where he could hold Margie up. Once he started to fall, but Otto ordered him to stand up and hold Margie in her place. He did so.

Ten minutes passed. Otto's arms were a mass of red blisters; his cheeks were seared; his eyes were almost

closed, and smarting as if a thousand needles were sticking in them. He could barely see. Only he and Red Dick remained standing. Red Dick wavered, tried to recover at Otto's command, then sank limply to the floor. Dimly Otto saw Margie wavering on her seat. He dropped the blanket and tottered towards her, climbing painfully over the sprawling bodies of the unconscious men.

As he reached her side she toppled over into his arms and tumbled him down underneath her.

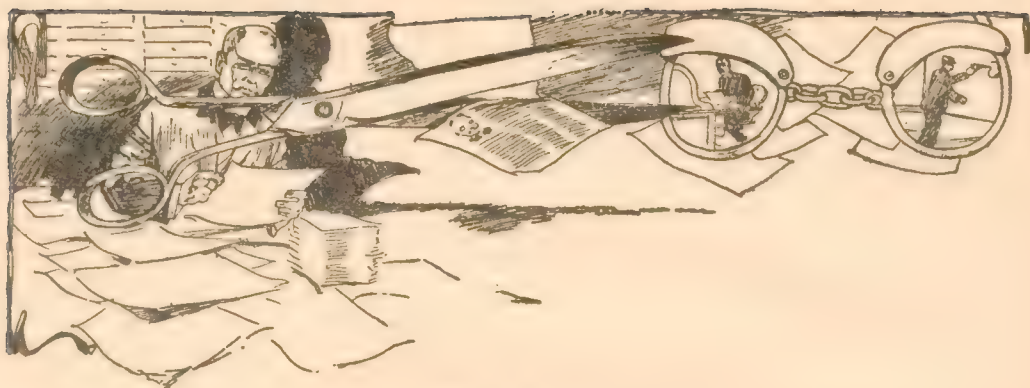
Margie was not unconscious. She looked about vacantly, saw the red glare through the shaft mouth, perceived that the fire had passed by them, and crawled out over the hot rocks until she reached the creek. The water was warm but it revived her, and she found an old canteen that had escaped the melting heat of the fire, and struggled back to the shaft with it filled.

Otto was the first one to receive her ministrations. A sip of water on his tongue and a wet cloth on his forehead brought him back to consciousness. He tried to speak, but his tongue was too thick and his words were only a hoarse growl.

Together, he and Margie revived the others. None was badly hurt, except Otto. The man he had shot had only a slight flesh wound in the leg that would heal in a few days. Fifty yards from the shaft they came upon the charred body of Bunker. Red Dick looked at it silently for some moments, then turned to Otto and before them all said manfully:

"Otto Paulsen, you're the only man in the bunch who's not a white-livered coward!"

"No," Otto's thick tongue growled, "I'm a meek man."



Law's Lottery

By A. L. SARRAN

A BANK-ROBBERY leads to this second adventure of McCarthy, the lawyer. His curious experiences in running down the criminals, together with the romantic motive which urges him on to success, combine to make a most ingenious and entertaining tale.

No. II—THE TYPEWRITER CIPHER

THE robbery of the First National Bank, of Franklin, thrilled the ten thousand inhabitants of that corn-belt city with delightful horror.

Within their very midst, so near that some of them, if they had listened, might have heard the thieves at work, a building had been broken into, the doors of the safe and vault had been blown off their hinges, and more than a half-million dollars in cash, bonds and notes had been carried away.

Popular prejudice against law breakers, and especially against thieves, was lost sight of in admiration of the bold audacity of the burglars and envy of the fortune they had obtained by their night's swift work. More than one man of high estate, and more than one man of low estate as such men are measured in Webster County, secretly contemplated his own future peace of mind, with all his worries gone, could he too, lay sudden hands upon the half of a million dollars.

Men and boys who were accustomed daily to pass the building in which the robbed bank was housed, and in pass-

ing, barely to note it, congregated before its front and gazed upon its unchanged walls and windows; behind them, last night while others slept, a few men, ignoring danger, had broken their way through stone and steel, and within the space of a few moments took for their own that for which other men are willing to give a lifetime of toil and service.

Two stalwart policemen stood guard at the door of the banking house and kept out the curious who otherwise would have overrun the place. Inside, the bookkeepers, tellers, and clerks looked idly on, or stood awkwardly about, while a pompous chief of police, whose knowledge of criminals and criminal methods had been gained by driving a dray, made a long and apparently painstaking examination of the premises.

In a back room, called the directors' room, but used daily by patrons of the bank for the writing of letters and the discussion of sundry topics, sat Culver, the bank's president, at the head of a long table surrounded by the bank's

directors, who had been hastily summoned to consider the burglary and to authorize such action as might be deemed expedient for the bank's welfare.

Without any formality, the door opened and the Chief of Police walked into the room.

"Well, fellers," he said familiarly, "you've shore been stung, aint you? Looks like they made a good git-away, don't it? I been a-lookin' over the premises, an' it's my opinion that they was four of 'em. Two of 'em done the work, an' two of 'em watched—one at the front an' one at the back. I seen some tracks there at the back door where a feller has walked up from the street, an' then walked back. No sir! I give it as my professional opinion that there was four, an' they was reg'lar hands at the business."

"Your powers of observation must be very acute, indeed, Mr. Porter," said Culver, drily. "Would you mind telling us, as interested parties, just what you have found that leads you to these conclusions?"

"Well, Mr. Culver," replied the Chief, "without meanin' to give a short answer, or to cast any reflections, I do mind. Y'know there is such a thing as givin' the public your clues, which is jist the same as puttin' the thieves on their guard. Don't ast me no questions, an' I'll git them robbers fur you. Yes sir, I'll git ever' last one of 'em."

"Very well, Mr. Porter; have your own way," said Culver. "If you are successful, you will be amply rewarded. The directors of the bank have just now authorized me to offer and pay a reward of five thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of the man or men who robbed the bank, five thousand more for the return of the cash taken, and five thousand more for the return of the securities taken. While I doubt, very seriously, the accuracy of your observations and the correctness of your deductions, yet it will give me unbounded pleasure to have you prove them, and obtain the reward."

The Chief whistled, nowise abashed by Culver's criticism. "Fifteen thousand! Fellers, that's shore some reward an' I'd like to git it."

"You are no more anxious to get it than we are to pay it, Mr. Porter," said Culver. "And in the meantime, let me suggest that while you are idle here, the thieves are getting farther and farther away."

"That's so," assented the Chief. "I'd better be goin', I guess. Well, so long, fellers."

"What makes you doubt Porter's conclusions?" asked one of the directors as soon as the door had closed. "He might be right."

"For one thing, the footprints which he says were made in the rear, by the man who kept watch there, were made by me this morning," replied Culver. "I walked from the back door out to the street and back again, looking for 'signs,' and was not able to find anything. Mr. Porter's wonderful eye has received very little education in the art of seeing things since he left his dray to become the head of Franklin's police department, and I am sure he found nothing in his investigation here to-day. Yourselves, myself, the bank employees, and Mr. Porter, have been the only persons inside the bank since the robbery, except John P. McCarthy, the attorney, who was in here a few minutes this morning to ask if a certain check had been paid. You, I, all of us, have looked the room over carefully, and we have found absolutely nothing; I do not believe that Mr. Porter has done any more than we, and our only hope lies in—"

Culver was interrupted by the entrance of one of the bookkeepers, who said Mr. McCarthy had just telephoned that he was coming over, and wished particularly to see Mr. Culver.

"Shall I let him come in?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the banker. "When he comes, bring him back here."

When the bookkeeper was gone, Culver turned to the group around the table and continued:

"When McCarthy was in here this morning, I told him that we would likely offer a large reward, and suggested that he had the brains to earn it if he would undertake the job. He is not making much headway in the practice of his profession, but for all that, he is a keen, brainy young fellow who

is going to make his mark. I was about to say when the bookkeeper came in that if we could get some man like McCarthy to undertake the job we might recover some of our loss. I wish you would 'size him up' when he comes in."

Thus it happened that, when, a little later, Culver had introduced him to those of the directors whom he did not know, McCarthy became at once an object of careful study and scrutiny. More than one of Webster County's money barons noted the erect body, clear skin, the inscrutable eyes that told no tales, the good nose, square chin, and well shaped head of this young lawyer—of whom Culver had just said that he was making but little headway in the practice of his profession—and told himself that he was a man who would, in time, "make good."

Realizing that the group around the table was regarding him with grave and unusual interest, McCarthy looked towards Culver, inquiringly.

"It's all right, John P," said Culver, smiling. "I've been telling these gentlemen that I believed you had the ability to catch the thieves and recover our money for us, if you could be persuaded to undertake the job."

"I wish I could," laughed McCarthy. "I am human enough to enjoy the financial reward that I have no doubt you will be glad to pay to the man who does that for you. As it is, I have come to pay a note that I owe the bank, and that is due to-day. When that is done, I have something to show to all of you, that possibly has some connection with the robbery. When I was over here this morning," he continued, turning to Culver, "you told me that the thieves had carried away your notes? Is that right?"

Culver nodded, and McCarthy continued: "Then your books will show that I owe you a note, given three months ago, for five hundred dollars, due to-day. I have prepared a statement setting forth that you made me a loan of five hundred dollars on February twentieth of this year—that the interest was deducted in advance—that you have not sold or assigned the note which I gave at the time of securing

the loan, but that your bank was robbed on the night of May twentieth, and that this note, with other notes, was stolen, and is not now in your possession—that you acknowledge receipt of the payment by me of the sum intended to be secured by the said note—and that you will indemnify me against any suit or action that may hereafter be brought against me on account of said note. Sign it, and here is your money."

When this had been done,—and while it was being done, more than one director expressed his approbation of the promptness with which McCarthy offered to pay the stolen note, and the business-like precautions he observed in paying it,—McCarthy took from his pocket what was apparently a typewritten letter and laid it on the table.

"Gentlemen," he said, gravely, "there is a strong probability that this writing, if it can be deciphered, will disclose something that may lead to the discovery of the bank robbers. I picked it up this morning in the bank here, just as I would pick up any other scrap of paper to make a memorandum on. The fact that it was folded when I picked it up indicates that it had fallen, or had been dropped, unnoticed, from the pocket of some one. A man who throws away a letter or other piece of writing, rarely does so until he has opened it to see if it is of any importance; having done so, he rarely ever refolds it, but simply crumples it up in his hand, and throws it down."

The directors nodded their approval of this deduction, and McCarthy passed the sheet over to Culver, who examined it and handed it to the director nearest him; thus it went the rounds.

"It's all Dutch to me," said a small, black-eyed man at the foot of the table. "I can't make anything out of it."

"It iss not Dutch," said the German meat packer who sat next to him. "If it was Dutch, I couldt make it out what it iss."

"It is a code letter, a letter written in cipher, Mr. Schultz," said McCarthy. "I fancy that if we could read it, we would find that it is written in very plain English. Mr. Culver, may I ask if it relates in any way to the business of the bank?"

"Not in the slightest," answered Culver. "We rarely have occasion to use a code, and when we do, we use the Western Union."

McCarthy's find began to look important. Inside the bank counters and railing, within a few hours after the robbery of the bank, he had picked up a folded sheet of plain, white paper, on which was printed in typewriting, the following:

nibwt qukk vw awbr dein gwew rgua
qwwj quew tiy rgw s4rw ur qukk kw4cw
gwew awbsubf nwaa4fw 4a ud 4scuaubf
tiy rgw s4rw 4 oikuxt qukk vw uayws
qukk vw r4jwb duear b4ruib4k icwe
bufgr si bir qeurw nw rii euajt ud
bwaa4et xinnybux4rw oyr oweaib4k ub
niebubf o4owea gwew 4ssewaa aj nt iks
x4kk.

Culver stared at the strange jumble of letters and figures. "I never guessed a conundrum or solved a puzzle in all my life, and this thing is beyond me," he said. "McCarthy," he added, earnestly, "I wish you would try your hand at this. We will pay a reward of five thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of the thieves, five thousand more for the return of our money, and five thousand more for the return of our notes and securities. If you will undertake the job, I will take care of your expenses."

"Much obliged for your offer of expense money, Mr. Culver," said McCarthy, "but I'll not need it. Thanks to your courtesy in permitting me to see one of your ledgers this morning, I made fifteen hundred dollars and collected it, too. And because of that same courtesy, I am going to put my time and a part of that fee into the business of finding your burglars—and getting that reward," he added, smiling.

McCarthy folded the cipher letter and put it in his pocket. "Now then," he said, briskly, "let's get down to business. I want to know exactly what was taken by the thieves, and what it consisted of."

Culver picked up from the table what appeared to be a balance sheet, and read from it.

"They took forty-one thousand, three hundred and forty-two dollars in cash; fifty-six thousand dollars in United States bonds; one hundred and sixty-

two thousand, six hundred and eighty-five dollars in other bonds, and securities which are set forth in detail on this sheet; and for some reason, they saw fit to carry away the two cases that contained all the notes owing to the bank, amounting to some four hundred and eighty-two thousand dollars."

"That's queer," said McCarthy, as he completed the task of setting down the figures Culver had given him. "Why would they take the notes? They couldn't realize on them, could they?"

"Not a cent," replied the banker. "But they took them just the same, and left over thirteen thousand dollars in cash."

McCarthy pondered this a few minutes, apparently forgetful of the presence of Culver and the directors, and then asked what kind of money the thieves had left.

Culver referred again to the balance sheet. "Nine thousand, four hundred and fifteen dollars in gold coin," he replied. "Three thousand, one hundred and thirty-nine dollars and fifty cents, in silver coin; two hundred and fifty-six dollars and ninety-three cents in nickels and coppers; and seven hundred dollars in one dollar bills. This money was found stacked up on the floor, outside the safe. The Chief of Police says the thieves were frightened away, and did not have time to take it."

"Maybe," assented McCarthy. "Where did they break in?" he asked.

"So far as we can see, they did not 'break' in," replied the banker. "Every door was found locked and every window fastened just as they were left yesterday. We have not been able to discover so much as a scratch on any of them."

"How about the books?" asked the lawyer.

"All here; not a one missing," was the reply.

"Any of them defaced or torn?" he persisted.

"I examined each of them this morning. They do not appear to have been touched," answered the banker.

"Looks like a case of 'keys,' doesn't it?" was McCarthy's comment as he rose to go. "I'm going to take this

cipher letter with me," he said, "and see if I can't make it out. Tell the officers that I have it; some of them may want to see it."

After lunch, McCarthy locked the door of the inner room that served as his private office, and set himself to the study of the details he had gathered. He had just completed a calculation of the weight of the money the burglars had left, and the weight and bulk of the stuff they had carried away, when the telephone rang.

The Chief of Police was on the wire.

"Say, McCarthy," he said, "them fellows at the bank says you got a letter that you picked up over there an' maybe it's got somepin' to do with them robbers? Have you?"

McCarthy admitted that he had found a cipher letter on the floor of the bank, and invited the Chief to come over and see it, offering to make a copy for him, if he wished it.

"Well, Mac," said the Chief, "I reckon you'll have to do the comin' this time. As Chief of Police of this here town, I deman' that you turn over to me all the evidence that you've got that's a-bearin' on this case. You bring that over here to me. Understand?"

McCarthy laughed. "Say, Chief," he said, "I don't sell the public the use of my legs, because the public will pay more for the use of my brains. But if you will place the use of your legs at the disposal of the public that employs you, your efficiency will be more than doubled. If you want to see that letter, come over." He hung up the receiver.

When McCarthy looked up from his work ten minutes later, the Chief of Franklin's Police Department stood before him, resplendent in the glory of his gold star and braid, smiling.

"Took your advice, Mac," he said, "an' walked over. I was tellin' Maw last night that I didn't feel like I used to, an' she said it was because I hadn't let up on my eatin' as much as I had on hard work. I expect you an' Maw is both right 'bout me needin' more exercise. Say, Mac, what kind of a letter was that'n you found, anyhow?"

McCarthy handed it to him, and the Chief looked at it for a moment, then

handed it back. "Shucks," he said. "I thought it was wrote on a letter head, or was in somebody's handwrite, or was in an en-vellup with a postmark on it so's we could tell where it come from, or somepin'. Shucks, Mac," he added, condescendingly, "a sheet of paper an' a bunch o' letters that don't spell nothin', an' there aint no name signed to it, nor nothin'—that aint no clue. Keep the derved thing. It aint no use to the department."

So well did McCarthy's features and manner reflect his apparent disappointment, that the Chief's contempt for his ignorance was softened, and he delayed his departure to explain again to the young lawyer the things in which the cipher letter was lacking and which rendered it unavailable as a possible clue. McCarthy listened to him without comment, and then started him on another track by saying: "By the way, Chief, Mr. Culver says you think there's more than one of the burglars."

"Shore thing, Mac," replied the Chief; "there was four of them. Two done the work, an' two watched, one at the front an' one at the back. That was a slick job they done, too. They was regular hands at the business; there aint no doubt o' that."

"Well, Chief, I'm going to put you next to something. That job was not done by professional burglars; neither was it done by four men. It was done by a man who is familiar with the ins and outs of that bank, and yet he is not, nor was he ever, a banker or a bank employee; he did it alone, without any help, and when you find him, you will find a man who is not very strong physically."

The Chief stopped in the doorway. "Where did you find out so blamed much?" he asked. "Did you see him?"

"You and I have had an example given us to work, as the school children say. I make the answer one man, not a professional; you make it four men, all professionals. I haven't seen my man yet, but when I get that cipher worked out, I expect to see him right away."

"There you go a-harpin' on that thing again. Aint I just told you it don't amount to shucks? Say!" he exclaimed, shaking his long finger at McCarthy,

"It's just such amachooors as you that go around a-tryin' to be de-tec-tives an' interferin' with the reg'lar police. You keep yore hands off this thing an' we'll git them robbers. You go to buttin' in an' they'll all git away."

McCarthy chuckled as the indignant Chief thumped down stairs; again the lawyer sat down to a study of the cipher. Sheet after sheet he covered, arranging his letters in many forms; but he made no headway beyond assuming that the figure 4 stood for the letter *a*, and that the letter *w* stood for *e*.

At length he gave it up and walked over to his typewriter, intending to make a copy of the cipher and secure help in its translation. As he approached the double keyboard machine, he noted, accidentally, the respective positions of the figure 4 and the letter *a*; then he looked at *w* and *e*.

"Glory be!" he exclaimed. "I've got it." Throwing himself into the chair before the machine, he hastily inserted a sheet of paper, and in less than five minutes had a perfect translation of the mysterious cipher.

McCarthy read and re-read the translation he had made. When he had construed it in connection with the robbery of the bank, he knew that he held in his hands the means by which the thief might be traced, and he hurried to consult Culver.

Crossing the street, he paused to allow a horse and phaeton to pass, and looked up into the face of Mary Peyton, who was driving. In all of the five years since he had first known her, the winning of Mary Peyton had been McCarthy's greatest ambition; success in his chosen profession, the making of money, he had come to regard only as a means to the end for which he hoped. Little by little she had been won, and for a long time now, these two had waited for his practice to grow—patiently, on her part; on his, in turns hopefully and despairingly, as his practice had prospered or dragged.

She checked her horse and motioned to McCarthy. He stepped into the phaeton, and she drove slowly on. "I'm just dying to hear the good news, John. What has happened?" she asked.

Eagerly he told her of the fifteen

hundred dollar fee he had earned and collected that very morning—of the fifteen thousand dollars in rewards offered by the directors of the robbed bank—of the finding of the cipher letter, his translation of it, and his hopes of securing the reward. He urged her to announce their engagement, and pleaded for a speedy marriage.

"Sweetheart," he said, "it has been a long, hard pull, but to-day our luck has turned, and now things are coming my way. May I come down to-night, and let's begin making plans for the future? Lots more fun in making plans than there is in merely building hopes. Let's begin to-night."

She turned her head to look at him, and he read in her eyes the love he had won. "Dear," she said, softly, "you are nothing but a great, big, lovable, hopeful boy. Don't you know that we can't trust our married life to luck? If only luck has turned to-day, why may it not turn back to-morrow? No, dear," she added, with a loving smile, "we will wait for a turn that is due to hard work and not to luck. Besides,"—and her eyes twinkled mischievously—"Mr. Douglass is coming over to-night to sing some new songs."

The advent of Henry Douglass in Franklin had not been conducive to McCarthy's peace of mind. Bearing credentials that admitted him to Franklin's exclusive clubs and homes, Douglass had, in the few weeks since he had come to this metropolis of the corn belt as a representative of the Greely Life Insurance Company, bounded into sudden popularity; an entertaining conversationalist, of attractive personality, he made friends easily—and he saw to it that they bought insurance in the Greely Life. But even the casual bystander in the social circles of Franklin soon realized that his attentions to Mary Peyton were serious, and many there were who compared him with McCarthy, and speculated on the probable winner.

All the eager hopefulness died out of McCarthy's face, and he stiffened, visibly, when she told him that Douglass was coming to sing for her that evening. He laid his hands on the reins to stop the horse. "I hope you'll enjoy the

little canary," he said angrily. "When you have tired of him, telephone me, and I'll take my turn at amusing you," he continued, getting out of the phaeton.

She bit her lip, and gathered up the lines. "If I waited for you to amuse me," she retorted, "I should be bored to death."

Before he could say another word, she had touched the horse with the whip and was gone.

McCarthy stood on the sidewalk, looking after her, ruefully. "Made my first big fee to-day, and had my first quarrel with Mary. There's no such thing as a lucky day."

Culver was not at the bank, and none of the employees knew his whereabouts. McCarthy returned to his office, and prepared the following advertisement:

S. K.—Money did not come but carried out deal anyway. Very profitable. Goods here. I cannot leave with safety. Come and get them to-day.

Calling an advertising agency by long distance phone, McCarthy arranged to have this advertisement inserted the next day in every morning paper in Chicago. This done, he sat down to a study of railroad time tables, and then went out to find Fred Kinney, a telegrapher who, McCarthy knew, was out of a job.

"Fred," he asked, "what kind of an outfit is necessary to send a message fifteen or twenty feet?"

"A silver dollar," answered Kinney, with a grin.

"Come on," insisted McCarthy. "I'm in earnest."

"So'm I," replied Kinney. "Gimme a silver dollar and I'll show you."

Kinney took the dollar which McCarthy handed him, and placing it in his mouth, began to tick out the dots and dashes of the Morse alphabet with astonishing clearness.

"Good enough," said McCarthy. "What are you going to do to-morrow afternoon?"

"Look for a job," replied Kinney.

"I've got one for you from half past two until half past five. You may keep that dollar on account, and there'll be ten more for you when your work is done. Does that strike you about right?"

"Sure thing," answered the telegrapher. "Where do I report?"

"At my office; and you be there at two-thirty, sharp. If you're five minutes late, there's nothing doing."

As he walked back up-town, McCarthy reviewed the case in detail. That his deductions were logical and his trap well set, he did not doubt; yet his mind was not at ease. He recalled his sudden quarrel with Mary Peyton, and his face flushed—this time with shame.

"What an ass I made of myself!" he said. "A great, big, jealous, flannel-mouthed ass!"

He sought out a greenhouse, and bought lavishly. On a small, plain card he wrote:

*If I could make you know how
ashamed I am, you would surely forgive
me.*

This he sealed and tied up with the flowers, and calling the wagon boy, bribed him to make this delivery first.

At half past two the next afternoon, Kinney, the telegrapher, was receiving his instructions in McCarthy's office.

"Fred," the lawyer was saying, "there is a telegrapher coming to-day from Chicago who is in great danger. I do not know his name, neither do I know what he looks like. Furthermore, I am not sure which train he will come on. There is one at three o'clock, and another at half past five. He will be on one or the other of them, and I want you to meet him and bring him to this office."

"Say," objected Kinney, "I'm not a mind reader, and you know telegraphers look human, just the same as other folks. Can't you give me some sort of a line on him?"

"His call is 'S K,' and that's all I know about him," answered McCarthy. "I want you to meet those two trains, and click out 'S—K' until you get his attention. Then click him this message." The lawyer handed Kinney a card on which was typewritten:

*Danger, danger, danger. Do not speak.
Follow me, follow me. Nod your head
if you understand.*

Kinney laughed. "All right," he said, "but you needn't mind about that 'nod

your head' business; if he's the real goods, we'll make each other understand, and mighty quick at that. What's he up against?"

"He's up against a good stiff term in the penitentiary, unless you can get him up here before the Chief of Police spots him," replied McCarthy.

"Does Porter know he's coming on this train?" asked Kinney.

"No, that's where you've got the advantage of him," said the lawyer.

"Well, you wait here. If 'S K' gets off that train, I'll bring him," said Kinney.

The long wait for Kinney's return was a trying one to the young lawyer. A dozen times he told himself that the whole thing was silly; and a dozen times he reassured himself that if the mysterious "SK" saw the advertisement, he would undoubtedly take the next train to Franklin. If he came, would the click of Kinney's silver dollar reach his ear? And if he heard it, would he listen to the message? And if he listened, would he follow?

Suddenly he heard the door of the outer room opened, and the footsteps of two men. He heard a man ask, in frightened, querulous tones: "What kind of a game is this? What are you steering me up against?"

McCarthy fancied he could see Kinney pointing to the door of the private office as he answered the stranger. "Bo," he heard the telegrapher say, "you're up against it, hard. Go in there and tell McCarthy who you are; he'll save you from wearing the stripes."

A door closed, and he heard Kinney go down the stairs, alone. McCarthy waited. In the outer room there was a shuffle of footsteps, and a timid knock on the door of the private office.

"Come in," called McCarthy, and the door opened, slowly. On the threshold stood a man at whom no second glance was needed to see that he was a victim of abject terror. The lawyer had time to note the sloping forehead and retreating chin of the stranger, as he stood in the doorway, uncertain whether to advance or retreat. The drawn face, the loose-hung lower jaw, and shifting eyes reflected the fear that gripped his heart, and would not be loosed.

"Come on in," said McCarthy reassuringly, "and tell me what I can do for you."

"They said—you could—help me," replied the frightened man. "My name's Carson."

"Carson? There are dozens of men named Carson," said McCarthy, "and I don't want to make any mistake. If you are the right Carson you can tell me the name of the man to whom you sent this letter," he continued, holding out the cipher letter that he had found in the bank.

The reply Carson made was so unexpected that McCarthy was dumfounded for a moment, but he managed to conceal his surprise and calmly answered: "Right you are."

"All right, Carson," said the lawyer, after a half hour's talk. "The best I can do for you is to get you out of town. If I undertake to do that, you must do just as I say. It's up to you. If you want me to hide you, and get you out to-night, say so. There's a little room at the back end of this hall where I can hide you until train time."

The yellow streak in Carson's make-up was a broad one; not for all the banks in Webster County would he have faced again the terror that gripped him while he spelled out the message Kinney had clicked to him at the depot.

"Show me the room," he said. "I'll do just as you say."

In the back room of the bank, called by courtesy the directors' room, sat Culver, the bank president, and Henry Douglass, representative of the Greely Life Insurance Company. As McCarthy approached them, Culver saw that he had news and began an apology to Douglass for the necessity of being alone with McCarthy.

Douglass rose to his feet, but McCarthy, with one hand in his pocket, motioned him to be seated again. "We'll let Douglass in on this," he said.

"Good," said Douglass, "what is it?"

"This!" answered the lawyer. And Douglass found himself looking into the muzzle of a blue-steel revolver, while the sharp voice of McCarthy was ordering him to put his hands on the table in front of him.

"Search him," said McCarthy to the banker; and as the latter hesitated, he added: "Go ahead; he's our man."

A search of the insurance man's clothes resulted in the finding of a high powered automatic pistol, which Culver confiscated.

"Be careful, John P.," said the banker. "We don't want to make any mistake, you know."

"We are not making any mistake, Mr. Culver, for Mr. Douglass is the high class artist who so successfully blew open your safe, and did it without help of any kind. He—"

"You are a dirty liar," said Douglass, so quietly and earnestly that for a moment even the lawyer himself was impressed.

"Let us see if I am," said McCarthy. "Mr. Douglass was for a long time a high class workman in the employ of the Western Safe Works. He has a friend, a Mr. Carson, now in the employ of the big cereal mill trust, but formerly a telegrapher. The Trust secured an option to buy the mills of the Franklin Cereal Company for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in cash."

"That part is correct," interrupted Culver, "for I secured the option for them."

"The Franklin people refused to carry out the deal when the Trust attempted to exercise its option, and it was planned to send a quarter of a million dollars here in cash, with which to make a tender, preliminary to bringing suit to enforce contract."

McCarthy looked inquiringly at Culver, and the latter nodded. "Correct," he said.

"Carson, in the employ of the Trust, learned of this plan, and hunted up his friend Douglass; together they schemed to get this money. Douglass came here as the agent of a life insurance company, cultivated an acquaintance with the bankers of Franklin, and waited the sending of the money, of which Carson was to advise him.

"Carson sent him a cipher letter, advising him that the money would be shipped to the First National Bank here on May twentieth, and in the forenoon of that day, sent him a telegram confirming it. That night the bank was

robbed, but the thief failed to get the quarter of a million."

"For the reason that it was not sent," said Culver. "That morning I persuaded the owners of the Franklin Mills that they would lose in the courts, and that it was better to close up the deal now. They agreed, and I succeeded in getting the Trust people by 'phone in time to save the shipment of the money. Go on with the story."

"That's all there is of it," said McCarthy, "except that our friend Douglass did the trick that night."

The three men sat in silence, two of them steadily regarding the third. Culver did not speak for the reason that he was following McCarthy's lead; McCarthy said nothing, for he wanted Douglass to have a taste of the Fear of the Unknown that had so thoroughly cowed Carson; but evidently Douglass was made of a different fiber. Finally, McCarthy held out a sealed envelope to Douglass. "From Carson," he said, quietly.

Douglass took it and his fingers trembled as he tore it open and read:

Make the best terms you can. McCarthy knows everything. CARSON.

"The white livered hound," he muttered, and then relapsed into sullen silence.

At length, Douglass raised his head. "Well," he said defiantly, "what do you want to do?"

"We want you to restore what you have stolen, first. Then we'll talk with you," said McCarthy.

"Yes—you will," replied Douglass. "You'll talk now, if you ever get anything back. I know you want your money more than you want me. Dicker with me, and you'll get it."

Both lawyer and banker attempted to show Douglass that his wisest course would be to make restitution, thereby earning, in some degree, a lessening of the punishment that was sure to be meted out to him.

"Aw, cut out that talk," he replied. "I'll give you back half if you'll let me go."

"You're wasting your breath," he said, after they had again urged him to make restitution. "Here's my last offer, and

if you don't want to take it, let's go on to jail. Give me five hundred in cash and let me go free, and I'll give back what the bank lost. If you don't do that, I'll use your money in buying my parole, and then have plenty left."

McCarthy nodded to Culver and Culver nodded to McCarthy. "Come on," they said. "We'll do it."

When they had assured themselves that the stolen money and securities were all safe, McCarthy picked up a package of bills labeled \$500, and handed it to Douglass—who took it and vanished.

Turning to Culver, the lawyer said: "You can deduct that five hundred from the ten thousand that is due me as reward money. I feel I would always want to think I gave the poor devil a chance."

Culver shook his head. "No," he said, "if you can give up the reward of five thousand dollars that the bank would willingly have paid you for that fellow's conviction, I can spare five hundred to help him along. When the bank opens for business to-morrow, your check will be good for ten thousand dollars. I knew it was 'in you,' McCarthy, but I'd like to know how you did it."

"I reasoned it out," said the lawyer. "The condition of the doors and windows showed that the thieves entered by unlocking a door, *and that they locked it when they left*; therefore, they were not frightened away, as Porter thought. There must have been a reason, then, why they left that four thousand dollars in gold, and that reason was found when I calculated its weight and the weight of the stuff they carried away.

"The gold that was left weighed less than thirty-five pounds, and the stuff that was taken, I figured, weighed

a little less than sixty-five pounds. Had there been two of the robbers, they could have carried all of it, easily; but one man could not have done so, unless, indeed, he was extraordinarily strong, physically.

"The cipher was hard, until I stumbled on its solution. Remember that it was typewritten? I simply struck the key to the right of the key I would have struck had I been copying the cipher, and I got its translation. By the way, I found that more than sixty different codes can be made in that manner, on any double keyboard machine. Here is a copy of the cipher as it was worked out."

McCarthy handed the banker a typewritten slip on which was printed the following:

Money will be sent from here this week. Will wire you the date it will leave, sending message as if advising you the date a policy will be issued will be taken first national overnight do not write me too risky if necessary communicate put personal in morning papers here address S K my old call.

"When I got through studying that," McCarthy went on, "I knew that one man did the work here, and that he had a pal in Chicago who was a telegrapher, and whose call had been S K. I sent an advertisement to be inserted in all the morning papers in Chicago, and it brought S K down here. The rest was easy."

That night, a young man, carefully arrayed in "purple and fine linen," held his sweetheart close and asked her again the question he had asked her in the phaeton. She pulled his head down, and kissed him before she answered. And her answer was truly feminine: "John," she said, "I couldn't possibly get ready in a day under two months."



Music and the Beast

By
**COURTNEY
RILEY
COOPER**



THE face of Mr. Jason Wallace had grown livid and he waved a telegram spasmodically in the countenance of the half-shrinking little woman before him.

"Do you know—" he began pantingly and then turned to throw mental epithets at the chugging, asthmatic noise of the accommodation train as it pulled out of the station. "Do you know what this is going to cost me? Eh, do you?"

The woman tried to reply. He stopped her.

"Do you think this is a joke, to tear me right out of the midst of the busy season, Mrs. Wallace?" he demanded. "Please answer me—is this all I am going to get, simply for you to stand there with your mouth open? Is it?"

"I was just thinking of you," she began in a penitent tone and drew closer, in order that the few loafers who had tired of the warmth of the station stove and were busily engaged in watching, might not hear. "I tried to think of some way, some scheme—you wouldn't pay any attention to my letters—"

"So you had some one telegraph that you were ill, to get me down to this jumping-off place," he snapped. "You worried me half to death, made me muddle up my affairs so they'll never get straightened out, and then when I get here, I find you well and laughing and thinking it a good joke!"

The eyes of the figure before him filled with tears and she twisted her gloves tight in her hands.

"You almost act as though you are sorry I'm not ill," came the halting reply.

Wallace replied with a stare of impotent rage. Then, snorting his disgust, he began to pace the station platform, slapping his rather pudgy hands behind his more pudgy back, kicking away with vehement wrath the bits of thawed and re-frozen snow that lay before him.

"Jason—please!" she pleaded; and he stopped, to throw back his shoulders and glare.

"Well?"

"Please don't act this way. It'll only make your nerves worse—and your indigestion—"

"Hang my nerves! Blow my indigestion! When's the next train out of this—this bump of nothing?"

The wondering loafers moved a bit closer and nudged one another. Mrs. Wallace saw them and tightened her lips; then she lowered her voice.

"Do you mean that, Jason—about going back?"

"Mean it?" He laughed sarcastically. "Do I look as if I were in love with this place? One station, three rubes with whiskers, a town pump, one store and the thermometer twenty above! No, I don't mean it! I'm crazy about the place, tickled to death! Look here, Ruth, do you know what this is going to cost me? Grissom's away: the office is shot to pieces; the McClintock bids are coming up—just about \$3,000, that's all."

"And will that break us?" Mrs. Wallace's voice had assumed a new tone.

"Can't say it will," Jason growled, a trifle surprised.

"Would it really affect your life one way or the other?"

"It's three thousand, just the same."

"Exactly what I thought you would say, Jason. That's the trouble between us; that's the reason I've been happier in this short little week down home here than—than since I can remember." Her voice became weak, then quiet and strong again. "It seems that the only thing I have known since our marriage is you, buried in your work, with never a pleasant word for me—at least not after our honeymoon. With nothing—"

"Is this going to be a family history?" Mr. Wallace asked snappishly.

"I'm going to tell my side," the wife answered. "Don't you think I have a right to? Jason, you've just buried yourself so in making money, making money, making money, that you've shut out everything else in life. You are not even civil to me. I try to please you and you never notice it. I do things for your comfort and you thank me with a grunt and a far-away look. I'm just human, Jason," she said, "and I've seen it, just as I've seen that you're losing your health, your temper, your whole self, all in a chase for something of which we have plenty. That's why I had George send that telegram," she concluded. "I knew that I couldn't get you down here any other way. I thought—well, I thought that if I could once get you here, you would stay a while at least and rest. Jason," she pleaded, "it would do you so much good. Wont you come out to the house with me and stay just a day or two? The fresh air and all—"

Jason had drawn a fat cigar from his pocket and jammed it between his teeth.

"When's the next train to the city?"

"Jason—please?"

The appeal brought only a gust of cigar smoke and an angrier tone.

"Mrs. Wallace!"

"There's one very shortly—if you insist on going."

"Insist?" He stared. "There's no insisting about it. I'm going—that's all. You can stay down here just as long as you like; I don't care when you come back. But I haven't any time to waste in foolishness or running around the country. I've had enough of it already."

The tears came to her eyes again and she stepped forward to lay a hand on his arm.

"Just as you say, Jason," she replied obediently, and then, without waiting for the kiss she knew from long experience was not forthcoming, she walked slowly to the far end of the platform, where an old negro was hurrying awkwardly to arrange the furs in the sleigh for her coming. Once she looked back, as the servant placed the protecting lap-robos about her, but Jason Wallace met the glance with cigar smoke and a stare. Then the bells jingled as the horses turned and the sleigh began its journey into the perspective. Jason Wallace watched a moment, bit savagely at his cigar and pattered into the station.

"When's it due?" he asked as he purchased the ticket.

"Fifteen minutes," said the station agent after a long conference with the bald-faced clock, "but taint goin' to get here. It's two hours' late."

"Hell!" exclaimed Wallace and completely annihilated his cigar.

"No cussin' in the station," warned the agent menacingly.

Wallace, too angry to reply, stalked to the wooden bench which ran along the opposite side of the station and sat down. One by one, and at great length, he read the advertisements on the walls. Then he twiddled his thumbs and shifted in his seat. He pulled another cigar from his pocket, rammed it into his mouth and lit a match.

"No smokin' inside here."

It was the station agent again. Wallace walked to the door and slammed it behind him. The sun, only peeking from behind clouds at its best, was hidden again and the air was colder than before. Wallace, his mind teeming with a thousand fancied wrongs, stalked up and down the station platform until he felt that he knew every board, every nail head in it. He looked at his watch. Instead of an hour he had been waiting only fifteen minutes.

Another cigar went to destruction as it was slammed on the platform and Wallace took a second inventory of the town. The station he was done with, disgusted with; the lonely store looked still less inviting. A gust of wind caused him to button his overcoat a bit tighter around his neck

and start walking again. And naturally he wandered from the station platform to the brownish clearance in the snow where the town pump thrust up its icy, incongruous shape, and then on beyond, into the road which led away from town.

Mr. Jason Wallace was angry. He was angry with his wife, with the station agent, with himself, with the weather and the railroad and the world and all it contained. His anger grew hotter as he walked along, not noticing much where he went, only walking, walking, walking, in the effort to pass those two hours which must elapse before he could stand a chance of getting back to the city.

"Then," he exclaimed very whole heartedly to himself, "when I get back to that slab-sided shack of a station, the train'll be three hours late!"

None of this improved his state of mind. He continued to plod along the road, his chin sunk deep in the collar of his overcoat, his eyes intent upon the small beaten pathway in the snow, made by the hoofs of horses, his ears open to none of the sounds of the wintry country. The call of the crow, showing black against the gray and white landscape as it circled in the wind, the cheeping of the snowbirds on the sagging wires of the barbed fences, the "pitteree—pitteree" of the red birds, darting in and out of the bare, yet jungle-like clumps of leafless underbrush—none of these had any charms for Jason Wallace.

"Funny joke!" he grunted. "Get me away from the office and bring me down here—" He gritted his teeth. "Funny joke," he said again as if the words would relieve his anger, "—funny joke!"

A growing sense of grayness, of half darkness, caused him to look up. The sun was gone; the day was massed with heavy clouds. Jason pulled out his watch and uttered an ejaculation. He had been wandering more than an hour; it was only forty-five minutes until train time, and further, Jason knew that it was growing dusk. It was then that something cold and white fluttered into his face to linger a moment and then dissolve. A few more flakes followed the first adventurer, as the pudgy

form turned in the roadway, and then, the reconnoitering over, the storm began in earnest.

The accommodation train hurtled through the snow to the station and hurtled away again, without a passenger. The station agent, remindful of the ticket he had sold, glanced up and down the wind-blown, snow-strewn platform and wondered. Then he went back to his kerosene lamp, his noisy, boiler-plate telegraph instrument, and his cannon-ball stove. Three hours later, he was still wondering—

For the reason that the cause of the mystery, his shoulders padded with tiny piles of white, his face wet and stinging from the snow, his fat legs weary from the strain, his features hard-drawn and furrowed with lines of earnest fear, was struggling against the wind, going forward with eager starts, then turning back, seeking again the main road he had left.

"Hang these cross-roads!" he growled as he stumbled over a culvert.

His neck felt as if it supported the weight of the universe. Gingerly he drew one hand from the warmth of the overcoat pocket, and removing his hat from his head, shook away the snow that was banked upon it. The contact of warm hand and cold snow made his teeth chatter. Again his hand was jammed deep in the pocket and again he turned to seek the elusive road. A light showed ahead. Jason Wallace stopped in his tracks, whistled, then whooped and started for it on a run.

But it was not the station. It was a great house of white, snuggled far back in a deep white lawn and fronted by snow-covered cedars which stood forth like monuments. About it all there was a fleeting, familiar something which Jason, in his sudden sense of relief, did not stop to decipher. At one side, a rambling, log-cabin-like structure, connected to the main building, was ablaze with light, and Jason could see men and women moving about inside. He started for the light, then turned and walked up the main pathway to the front of the house, where, in the darkness he fumbled for the bell, and remembering he was in the country, knocked.

It brought no response. Jason knocked again and then slammed one of his benumbed, snow crusted feet against the door. Finally there came a sound of heavy steps from within, the noise of the lock and a voice from the darkness.

"Laws! Kem in. How foh you come to dis yere do'?"

Jason judged by the voice that it was a woman and a negro. His coming explanation was cut short.

"Kem right on in! De folkses is all in de wing. Laws man, yo's mos' friz!"

Jason obeyed and stood hesitating. Suddenly the woman slammed the door and shrieked.

"Them do'nuts!" She started away into the darkness on a run. "Yo' kin fin' yo' way," she called over her shoulder. "Dey's all in de wing."

And Jason, cold, weary, was left alone in the darkness of a house, of the owner of which he had not the slightest knowledge.

The warmth was good. It sought Jason with a wonderful appeal, with a sense of comfort which, a few moments before, he could have believed only imaginary. He lingered by the door, hoping that the woman would come back, that she would inform some of the mysterious persons in "the wing" of his presence and send them to him. The sound of voices in an adjoining room gave him hope—then thrilled him. It was a man's voice he heard first.

"You're not going back to him; I wont stand it, Ruth!"

"George—don't say that." Jason started from the wall and stared into the darkness. The voice he recognized—he had cause to.

"I mean it," the other had responded. "He's bullied you about as long as any man has a right to; you've done everything that a wife should do. Look here, Ruth!" he exclaimed. "Let's just sift this thing out. You're not yet thirty. You've given the very best years of your life to this man—and what have you received in return?"

Jason clenched his fists and waited for the answer. It was a trifle slow in coming.

"Well," she began, and hesitated, "I've had a good home—and plenty of money to buy whatever I wanted."

"Wouldn't you have had a good home here?"

"Yes."

"Does he ever take you anywhere?"

"No."

"Does he ever trouble himself as to your amusement?"

"No."

"Why?"

Jason wondered what she would answer; he wondered whether she would lie against him. Then came a slight prick of conscience, stifled just as quickly by his ego, as the reply came.

"Don't hold that against him, George. It's true that he doesn't take me anywhere, but it's because he is busy always. That's all that's wrong with Jason. He's just so busy, making money, he has just let that one sole idea devour him so completely that nothing else can interest him. That's one reason why I try to forgive him his faults—it isn't as if he deserted me for some other woman or—or something like that."

"Does he ever have a pleasant word to say to you?"

"Not often," she admitted—rather reluctantly, Jason thought. "He doesn't think much about me at all. I—I thought that if I could get him away from business for a while that—well, you know we talked it over and planned all these things and then—well, I've told you how he acted at the station—before everybody there, just as if I were a child that must be scolded. George,"—her voice wavered,—“it just about broke my heart!"

There was silence for a moment, in which Jason breathed hard and in which he forgot the discomforts, the fatigue the storm had caused him. Suddenly the voice of George broke in.

"Look here, Ruth, haven't you been a whole lot happier since you've been down here than at any time in your married life?"

"Yes, I have, George."

"Is there any compelling reason why you should go back to him?" Jason's breath rushed into his lungs with a swift intake. "Remember, I am your brother, and I've a right to talk to you this way. Is there any real reason why you should go back to him?"

"George, don't—"

"Ruth, you're not going back to him!"

"No," she said, and Jason detected a break in her voice, "no, I'm not—I'm not going back to him."

Wallace heard the sound of footsteps and the choking voice of the woman, followed by the soft, sympathetic tone of the man. Then there was silence, silence except for the beating of his heart, the almost noisy surging of his brain.

Not going back to him! The temporary feeling of vague fear was deluged by a wave of anger which, shooting through his frame, drove out all before it, even to the last vestige of the storm's discomforts. Not going back to him—and because he had been busy making money, money that she had helped to spend!

"It's like a woman!" he muttered and grasped savagely at the doorknob. "It's like her. Well!" He shook his shoulders as if throwing away all weight of blame. "If she doesn't want to, she doesn't need to."

But as he started to open the door, there came a new thought which sent him back deeper into the room, to stand broad-legged, irresolute for the moment. It was not, he argued, that he cared one way or the other about the separation. It was simply that she should leave him of her own free will, that anyone could go against him and do what he had not been consulted about, could actually embark anywhere without gaining first his permission. All of a sudden, he decided to seek her out, to tell her this. She had no right to do it. He had provided well for her; he had given her good clothes; there was nothing in the marriage contract that said he should pave her daily life with soft words or with compliments or chit-chat. He had no time for it; he was too busy.

Jason set out into the darkness, his jaw clamped tight, and his hands groping for the stairs by which he believed she had gone to her room. He felt by the doorway that he had passed out of the room and into a hall. Both arms stretched wide, he searched for the stairway.

"Ruth," he called guardedly, but his

voice was lost in a burst of laughter. A tiny chink of light, displayed against the floor, showed the source of it, and recklessly he laid a hand on the doorknob, turned it—and then attempted to pull the door shut again. The noise of violins, of the voices of many men and women, had come to him from beyond. She was not there, certainly—crying. Jason pulled at the door, but something had clogged the closing of the tiny crack he had created.

It's the fool things that men do in this world which make or unmake them. Jason was a man. He allowed his hand to fall from the doorknob and started away. Then he turned and put one eye to the tiny aperture—just to make sure that she was not there.

Everything in the room was taken in at a glance, the twenty or more persons standing in two waiting lines, the tall man expectant upon a chair, the great bowl of dark colored liquid at one side, surrounded by mountainous piles of doughnuts, and presided over by a vast negro woman. The doughnuts found a kindred spirit in Jason, fostered by abstinence and whetted by the storm. He longed for a doughnut.

Yet it all was something of a mystery to him. Perhaps it was the pile of doughnuts which caused him to pause and to look again. Then, his thoughts abroad in some other room of the house where a woman was perhaps weeping and certainly planning divorce, his curiosity and his sense of hunger centered within the range of light before him, Jason allowed his eye to remain at the peephole.

Upon a table sat two men, their fiddles tucked under their chins, their bows poised in the air. The man on the chair gave a sweeping glance around the room.

"All couples ready for the Prairie Queen!" he shouted. The bows descended.

"Turkey in the straw, haw, haw, haw," scraped the fiddles, and the man on the chair joined his voice to the music:

"S'lute yo' partners!"

A shuffling of feet, a laugh or two and the eye of Mr. Wallace went closer to the crack in the door. Above the noise

came the creaking of the violin strings.

"Turkey in the hay, chaw, chaw, chaw!"

Two arms shot into the air, the double row of men and women swerved.

"Balance all!"

"Rake 'em up, dig 'em up—"

"First couple forward, second couple back!"

"Any way a-tall—"

"Ladies to the center, gents all around."

"So yo' git the ol' tune an'—"

"Do-se-do!"

"Call it Turkey in the straw!"

"Swing yo' partner, all around; bend yo' left knee to the ground; kiss her onct an' jump away; prom-e-nade an' all sa-shay!"

The maze of action before Jason suddenly seemed to blur and become distant, to change shape and adopt new environment. Upward, through the cluttered thoughts of divorce, of contracts, of roll-topped desks and business life that lay in his brain, a something else was fighting for recognition, a something which seemed to struggle terribly to bring itself before the retina of his memory. There was a picture, a memory—an experience of which he had formed an integral part—that was striving to come to him, but what it was he could not quite fathom. He closed his eyes, shutting out the scene before him, and tried to think. Was it something in regard to the tune they were playing, the rollicking, hurrahing—

The fiddles ceased for a second, to begin again with another melody and then that something in the bottomless pit of his brain seemed to reach out and be grasped by a helping hand. What was that they were playing? He should know; he was sure he had heard it some time, somewhere before—when he was younger. The man on the chair was shouting again:

See yo' lovin' sweetheart, 'scort her to
her home,

Arkansaw Traveler says it aint no use
to roam;

Oh, balance all the comp'ny, comin' down
the lane—

S'lute an' swing yo' partner, an' start all
out again!

There it was! The "Arkansaw Traveler," the "Arkansaw Traveler" and a big platform out in the woods, where gasoline torches threw their yellow glare against the darkness of the trees, where three old fiddlers, their hearts and souls living only for the times when the bows were in their hands, seated at one side, sawing away for dear life, while just such a man as the one in the next room stood on a stump, shouting himself hoarse as he directed the movements of the square dance on the platform.

The music and the shuffling of feet beyond the crack in the door had ceased for the moment. Perhaps it was a good thing, for Jason Wallace was watching no longer. Instead, his back was to the wall, his hands behind him and his eyes staring out into the darkness at nothing in particular, and yet at everything.

He was seeing beyond the blackness before him, out to that cleared patch in the woods where a freckled, bare-foot boy sat in the crotch of a great tree, watching the young father and mother circle about on the platform to the sound of the fiddles and to the echo of the screech owl in the hickories and the bullfrogs in the creek, just a good fifty yards away.

Life was good then, in those days when they would take him with them to the "camp dance" in the timber; it was good when, afterward, they all would go lumbering home in the creaking, bumping old wagon, drawn by its long-eared mules, plodding up the hills or being forced into a trot on the down grade.

Screech owls and bullfrogs were not the only things which lived then—Jason Wallace became cognizant of that fact as the search-light of his memory began to play stronger and stronger upon that something which had risen from the depths. There were the squirrels which he had hunted with his slingshot—and the ambition to hunt them with his father's rifle; there were the turtle doves, which, with their low-toned cooing, always made the shade down by the big pond seem softer and cooler and more pleasant; there were the cows, lurking under the crab-apple trees, the hazy glow over the wheat

fields, growing golden and more golden and then chameleon-like, as it merged into the deep green of the waving hedge beyond.

Jason moved against the wall and shook his head a bit as if to call back the presence of the necessity for settling that matter of the separation. But it was hard to keep his mind on it, for memory was very active; the seasons changed with dream-like swiftness before his recollection; the wheat field became one of stubble; the green corn turned to yellow, its tent-like shocks piled up in long rows, while sunny pumpkins dotted the furrows everywhere. Jason Wallace felt his lips pucker—or was it the memory of the eating of the first persimmon, just the day before frost? The wind changed; the sky became overcast—it snowed; and there he was again, a crocheted comforter around his neck, his cap pulled far down over his ears, his feet tight in red topped boots, plowing through the snow while a dog went on before, a dog which sniffed at the ground and howled with glorious happiness at the first scent of a rabbit. There was the big hill and the bob-sled and the fast, whisking glide downward to be followed by the long tug back up again, labor never grudged, never shirked—

“Partners for the quadrille!”

The voice made Jason start and as he turned, a glance through the crack of the door gave him a view of a new figure in the midst of the others—his wife. She was pale, and beneath her eyes were rings Jason Wallace had seen before. Yet she smiled as she moved among the crowding couples that were taking their places in the center of the big room, to the accompaniment of the tuning-up of the violins. Just once she looked toward the door which concealed Jason, and he involuntarily started back. Then she went on, to half-conceal herself in a chair in a far corner of the room.

Just why Jason stayed at the door, he could not fathom. Yet he did stay, and staying, watched.

The quadrille was on. The fiddles began their creaking again and an itching sensation began to make itself known in Mr. Wallace's left shoe—a

very queer feeling, indeed, and it was spreading. The other foot was beginning to exhibit similar symptoms. The fiddles kept on, while the players, swaying and waving in their chairs, threw their eyes to the ceiling and worked their arms more feverishly every second. Jason looked down in the darkness as if to discover the cause of his infirmity. It was invisible, but it was present and refused to leave. It broadened out; it engulfed his ankles. It traveled upward and finding the knees, caused them to tremble. One foot, awkwardly, something like the claw of an overfed rooster in the act of stretching, left the floor, traveled to an angle of fifteen degrees and wiggled!

The spell was on. From the other side of the door, the strains of “Money Musk” came billowing with ever increased fervor, while the shouting of the dancer grew louder, more strident. Again one of Mr. Wallace's tired, heavy feet was lifted for a grotesque twitch. Then he shifted his position and began to tap the floor, keeping time with the music, his eyes close to the door.

To tell the truth, Wallace didn't know just exactly what to do. His wife was within; he could see that she had entered by another door which evidently led to another hallway and a staircase. It was his earnest intention to see her, to make her sorry for what she had said, to make her apologize—and yet, the motives in his brain did not seem to harden as they should; it didn't seem possible to concentrate his anger as it should be concentrated so long as those two be-whiskered men on the table sawed away at their fiddles, and as long as the one on the chair howled his directions at the laughing couples beneath. Besides, where is the majesty of anger when one is peeping through a crack in a door, watching a square dance, his feet trying to keep time with the music of long ago, and now and then absolutely disregarding all business ethics and all precepts of dignity by wiggling unceremoniously?

Again Jason caught sight of Mrs. Wallace as she came forward a bit and took a seat almost directly opposite him. And it was impossible for him to

look at her, her trim figure, her shapely hands, her even features, without making comparisons. But these he downed, shook away and tried to forget. Jason was angry. At least he tried to tell himself, not only once but a hundred times, that he was raging, worse off than he had been in twenty years, just mad enough to go in there and break up the whole party, disintegrate the happiness into a thousand fragments and then rebuke his wife as she never had been rebuked before. But his foot still kept tapping the floor and his eyes still remained at the peephole.

The dancers suddenly disbanded and took expectant places at the sides of the room; but the fiddles, changing their tune with the rapidity of long practice, welcomed a new figure, evidently one of the farm hands, who shuffled to the center of the room and stood grinning, his arms hanging limp at his sides. The man on the chair began to clap his hands and stamp a foot. The others about the room laughed and began to pat also. Then, as the man above began to sing, the other allowed his arms to swing wide and his feet to travel rapidly and into devious pathways.

Raccoon's tail is ringed all around,
Possum's tail is bare—

shouted the man on the chair.

"Yee-haw!" came from the center of the floor as the dancer executed a double shuffle and cut a pigeon wing.

Rabbit aint got no tail a-tall—
Diddle—deedle—dum-di-de-di-do-dum—!

"Hoo-ray!" ejaculated the dancer and waved his arms for a "spread eagle."

"Nothin' but a bunch of hair," the man on the chair finished.

Again the bottomless pit in Jason's brain opened and there rose a tidal wave which swept before it anger, thoughts of business, thoughts of divorce, roll-topped desks, overheard conversations—all except that something which continued to throw a calcium-like glare upon that old picture of the clearing in the woods and the little boy who sat in the crotch of the great tree and watched and laughed and watched.

Jason took his head from the crack at the door and, somewhat like a bee-stung cow, did a little turn on his own account in the darkened hallway. Then, just as the music stopped, that something from the bottomless pit urged him, forced him to lay a hand on the door and slowly push it open.

Mrs. Wallace started from her chair with a cry of surprise and came to meet the apparition, a smile painted red on the white fear of her face.

"Jason," she queried, "you—"

"Yeh," said that individual shortly and tried to frown.

"You missed your train?" she asked. "How on earth did you get here?"

"Walked." Jason felt rather pleased with himself, for the tone was still a bit churlish.

"That's a shame," came the sympathetic reply. "If you had only let us know. Did you just get here?"

"I've been here,"—and Jason's voice became hard—"long enough to hear—"

"Partners for th' Virginny Reel!"

"To hear what?" she asked, half fearfully.

"To hear—"

"Three more couples for the Virginny Reel!"

"What, Jason?"

But the something had turned Jason's head to the fiddlers, and there was a queer little feeling in his heart—or some place around there—that he didn't understand.

"Nothing, nothing," he said brusquely.

"One more couple for the Virginny Reel!"

"Look here," said Jason with an expression of half stage-fright upon his countenance, "let's be them."

"What?"

"The one more couple—in the dance."

"Jason!" The tone bore worlds of meaning. "You—and I?"

"Yeh! Just have to do what he tells us, don't we?"

"*Turkey in the straw—*" and the fiddles began. Bulkily Jason took his place in the line and with pursed lips listened to the signals. Once he stole a look across at his wife and noticed that her face was beaming and that

there was a light in her eyes that he had not seen in a long, long time—just when he couldn't remember, but he liked the expression, and was almost candid in telling himself so.

"S'lute yo' partners!"

"Come on, Jason, that's you." It was the laughing voice of Mrs. Wallace, who had leaped across the aperture and was tugging at his arm. Jason became aware of a queer expression on his face. He, too, was laughing.

Ten minutes later, his collar wilted, his face streaming with perspiration, but still grinning, shaking hands with persons to whom his wife introduced him on the fly, Jason was doing the "do-se-do," swinging his partner and "sashaying" with the grace of a hippopotamus, but with a willingness unbounded.

"Promenade all fo' the London Bridge!"

It was a new one to Jason, but he followed the touch of his wife's hand, half trotting along and then bending as they came to the couple with their hands joined in an arch above them. Then the arch descended, and with some difficulty held Mr. Wallace and his wife, captives. Jason looked into the laughing eyes of Ruth and became bewildered.

"Well?" she queried and smiled.

"Huh?" Jason appealed, and recoiled a bit at the laughter around him.

"Aren't you going to kiss her?" came a voice.

"Rules of the game, Jason," his wife laughed, and Jason bent over.

The strangest part of it all was that it seemed very good to Jason. There was something of a shamefaced look on his countenance and a half childish desire to rub the back of his hand across his lips.

"I wish they'd play a waltz," he pleaded as his wife led him to a chair. "I used to be an awful good waltzer when I—"

She was gone. In a second she was back and smilingly holding forth her arms to him while the fiddlers, their bows hacking out the old, old "Over the Waves," adopted a new swing of their heads to coincide with the rhythm of the music.

He stepped on her feet, it is true, but he apologized and seemed to mean it. He bumped into everyone in the room and stopped to apologize again. His face assumed a worried look of perspiratory enjoyment that was painful in the extreme, but still he struggled pantingly on. Suddenly he caught her just a bit tighter in his rather awkward arms and looked frightened.

"Ruth," he whispered, "gee, but you're pretty!"

Just what it was that took her away at the end of the dance, Ruth Wallace was a bit too happy to notice. But a few minutes later, when she returned, it was to find her husband at the cider bowl, a great glass in one hand, while the other was busily engaged in stuffing doughnuts into his mouth. He was saying something, extremely important, to judge from the attention of his listeners. Ruth came close, then smiled to herself.

"And look at me," Jason was proclaiming puffily between mouthfuls of doughnuts. "I'm thirty-five and fat and no good. What I need is to get out in the country where's there's some good air and work it off. Yes, sir, get right out and work, swing an axe, chop wood, go walking and things like that. That's what a city man needs. Cramped all up over a desk—it's not good for one. No, sir, a man ought to have a place out in the country where he could go and forget things, get out in the open and live. That's the thing. Hello, Ruth," he said, turning, "when did you come along?" He patted her on the cheek and then put one arm around her. "Here," he said, "you're thirsty. Have a glass of cider!"



Red Fleece

By RICHARD POST

THE lake lay placidly quiet; scarcely a ripple of a breeze stirred. The soft purring of the water against the keel of the motor boat and the sharp bark of the exhaust were the only sounds that disturbed the quiet of the early summer's evening. On the high bluffs, here and there a farm house nestled among the trees, and at one end a cheaply built hotel and a cluster of cottages marked the incipient summer resort.

A narrow arm of the lake projected northward like a verdure bordered aisle. Here the green of dense foliage came to the water's edge. Pond-lilies, white and yellow, floated in the quiet stretches near shore, dancing in the wavelets that our boat sent upon them. Mud-turtles stupidly stared from half submerged logs; an oriole sang in a tree-top bending over the water; the peace of nature's August was on the lake that evening.

"I believe the creator of *Sherlock Holmes* makes the great detective remark," observed my friend Hazell, as he held a match to a fresh cigar, "that the quiet, smiling country, farm and wood and lake just like this, is the setting wherein are staged our darkest and most inscrutable crimes. It seems almost morbid, though, to think of such things on a night like this. But I believe his contention was the absence of the curiosity of the law, if I can use such a phrase—its constant surveillance, which renders crime difficult and

dangerous and its detection easy where men are gathered together. In the country, each isolated farm holds its mystery, often for years."

"That may be true in England," I interrupted, "but surely not in this country. Such a thing would not be possible in a peaceful scene like this."

"But to my mind," Hazell went on, without heeding my words, "even more than the absence of the direct contact with the law is the very loneliness of existence that is in the essence of the life these people lead. Solitude leads to brooding, to irritation at trifles, to imagining of wrongs. The surest way to keep our sanity is to rub up against each other, and that these people don't do—not enough, at any rate. Certainly many of our most mysterious crimes are products of the silences."

"Now, Dick, I wish you would remember this is a vacation. No talk of shop goes," I broke in. "Can't you let your theories of crime rest until we are back in our Van Buren street cubby-hole?"

Hazell smiled and agreed with me. "But this long stretch of uninhabited shore, with only the two farm houses on the other side, makes me think of it. Quiet and peaceful enough now, but, Roy—so lonely! Think of a November night with the wind whistling up the bayou and the pines moaning in chorus. It must be dreary indeed."

"You're surely far enough away from your detection and crime investi-

gation here. Nothing could ever happen at Crystal," I stated with conviction.

We were at Crystal Lake, one of those beautiful bodies of water which dot the map of the western counties of Michigan. The city, panting under the oppressive heat of the August sun, was as dull as Chicago can ever be. I had experienced little difficulty in inducing Hazell to spend with me the last two weeks of the month which composed my well-earned vacation. We were boarding at the hotel, paying two dollars a day for the usual lack of comforts which the summer resort proprietor, living in ten months on what he earns in two, is obliged from his way of thinking to charge. But the long, peaceful stretches of the lake, the solitude of the deep forests, the splashing black bass among the reeds, atoned, and more, for any of the creature comforts which we had to forego.

It was in the years when the summer resort idea was still in its infancy, and there were only a half-dozen cottages clustered around our habitation at Crystal. Now the lake is built up from end to end; most of the forest is no more; and like a score of others, it is only a farther removed suburb of the western metropolis. The real country, with its ineffable charm, is gone from Crystal, but in the fall of nineteen-two it had not as yet departed.

It has always seemed to me that there was more fact than fiction in the old superstition of knocking wood when a boast is made—the neglect of this simple precaution being supposed to cause the reverse of the assertion to occur. As we ran our boat up to the little dock, a group of people, fellow resorters with a mingling of farmers, our host of the hotel at their head, came running to meet us.

"Looks as if there's something we've been missing, Roy," Hazell remarked.

"Oh Mr. Hazell!" called our proprietor, his words coming in sharp jerks, his breath gone in the unusual exertion. "Mr. Hazell, we've been looking for you. A dreadful thing—a most terrible thing has happened. We knowed you'd had experience in such matters—we've been waiting for you. It's a murder," he concluded solemnly.

"Murder!" Hazell ejaculated. "Here?" Then in an undertone: "What did I tell you, Roy? Was it a presentiment?"

"Where?" he then inquired. They led us up the slope, all talking at once, each with his own view and aspect of the tragedy. I gathered that the victim was a Mrs. Blessing and she had lived on a farm facing the branch road, one of the "eighties" which rearward ran to the shore of the bayou. The body had been found in a deserted cow-shed back of her home.

Dr. Hardy, also a guest of the hotel, joined us and together we plodded through the deep Michigan sand. Hazell occasionally asked a question, but in the main we listened to the excited chatter of the neighbors, each of whose stories differed in some little detail from that of the other.

A rural constable, who had been hastily summoned from his own farm a mile down the road, met us in the yard before the plain one-and-a-half story frame house with the cow-shed of the tragedy visible in the rear. He greeted Hazell awkwardly, yet with a consciousness of the dignity of the law which he personified.

"We officers," he stated, "ought to dig up this mystery at once—at once," he repeated. "Mr. Harris at the hotel said you were a policeman or some such person from Chicago, and I knowed you'd be the man to work with. I'm James Haines, constable of Crystal township," he declared.

"I am not exactly an officer, if that is what you expect," Hazell answered with what would have been a smile but for the presence of tragedy. "But if I can be of any assistance, I am only too happy to tender my services. Let us see the body."

There were splashes of blood on the front steps and spots of scarlet on the grass under an open window. From there the sanguinary trail was plain to the half tumbled-down shed where the victim lay. A torn white apron, red-spotted, swung like a scarecrow on a doornail. Just inside was all that was mortal of the poor old lady, bruised and battered out of almost all resemblance to a woman.

"The door was latched, a piece of string caught over a nail on the inside," I heard Haines explaining to Hazell a few minutes later. "The old lady must have been carried over there and thrown in."

The door was in two sections, an upper and lower. When I had regained my composure, I examined it with curiosity. The upper panel was open and the murderer could easily have made his exit by its means, but if so there was no evidence of blood to mark his flight.

"Mrs. Simmons, across the way down a piece, came over to visit old lady Blessing, and she it was that first noticed something wrong. It's God Almighty's goodness that she didn't go no further, for she's took with her heart occasional, but went right down and told me. I up and came, and that's how I found the body. It gave me a start, too, you can just warrant it has."

A careful examination of the premises followed. It was apparent that the woman had been attacked immediately on her return from the cross-roads store, where she had been to trade shortly after noon. An overturned basket of provisions on the front steps and a jagged hole, bloodstained, in the screen of the door, showed that she had made a fight for her life. It was the opinion of the constable that the deed had been committed there and the body carried to the cow-shed and thrown in, in an effort at least to delay discovery. Why the murderer should have latched the lower door after him and crawled out through the upper portion, he did not explain. Hazell did not hazard an opinion.

We searched for footprints, but without success. The last few weeks had been rainless, and the clump of grass and the shifting white sand of the yard left no distinct impression.

"He was after money," explained Haines, pointing to the open window with the bloodstains along its edge. "The widow had a sizable chunk of cash in the house, you can just bet." And yet a careful search of the premises failed to reveal anything disturbed.

The mangled form was carried into the house and a number of the neigh-

bors, including Constable Haines, mounted guard, pending the arrival of the coroner in the morning.

As we walked back to the hotel, the life history of the victim was unfolded to us. Mrs. Blessing was full eighty, the possessor, besides the farm—the value of which at that time was problematical—of a goodly sum in the village bank and the owner of several mortgages on near-by farms. In the language of the country, she was "well fixed."

While her neighbors expressed natural horror at the deed, yet it was obvious from their remarks that almost any other resident of the vicinity would have been more sincerely mourned. Even in the hour of death, such horrible, tragic death, no one spoke a kind word in her memory. She was cross, crochety, crabbed, mean in her neglect of the little amenities which constitute so much of life in the rural districts. She was a miser, clinching the pennies in her bony hands. Her granddaughter, Janet, had kept house for the old woman for several years. The neighbors united in a chorus of denunciation at the way she had been starved and beaten. Finally, they said, affairs came to a climax when William Kennedy, "as good a man as ever breathed," but who worked as a farm hand at the Parker place, began to "keep company" with the girl.

Janet, "a dear little slip of a thing," as a woman interpolated, patient and yielding in everything else, was staunch enough in his defense. With a touch of her grandmother's firmness, she refused to give up her lover. As a result, the girl had been driven from the house and was now waiting on table at the summer hotel.

"The old lady came over to see her only last week," chipped in one of the resorters, "and found her strolling with the young man. You ought to have heard the tongue-lashing that the old woman bestowed on them; and he's pretty hot tempered, too. Mrs. Blessing was going into town on Saturday and cut Janet out of her will, if she hadn't given up the fellow by that time. She meant it, too."

The recital of the old woman's mis-

deeds was not yet complete. On unfriendly terms with all of her neighbors, except her one crony, Mrs. Simmons, with whom she only maintained a state of semi-war, Mrs. Blessing in particular quarreled bitterly with Jonas Crumble, the owner of the next farm, separated from hers by a rail fence. Jonas, we gathered, was also unpopular among his neighbors, yet the consensus of opinion attributed the cause of the difficulty to the woman. It was the grievance of a disputed line fence, supplementing the inevitable clash of two bitter and soured dispositions.

"While I do not doubt that all of this is true," Hazell said, "it doesn't alter the fact that an atrocious murder has been committed or that the perpetrator, whoever he is, should be punished to the fullest extent of the law." He spoke without bitterness, for the veriest tyro could see that the woman's detractors were sincere; but it was evident that the awful horror of the mutilated body was uppermost in his mind.

All agreed as to this, and next the tongues were wagging as to the possibility of its being Janet Blessing's lover who had committed the crime. While they spoke in the highest terms of the young man, still the opinion seemed to be that he was the guilty person. Kennedy was known to be a hot-blood, and more than one of the gossiping group recalled that he had uttered threats. Many had the man already convicted and sentenced in their minds.

Another faction held that the crime was probably the work of a tramp. They pointed to the open window and the known fact of the widow keeping large sums of money in the house. One of the more observant hazarded the belief that from the ferocity of the deed it might well be the act of a maniac. Such was my own opinion.

We found the sheriff at the hotel, dusty from a ten-mile drive from the county-seat. He had with him a man who looked suspiciously like a prisoner. He was dressed in rough country clothes, and there were splashes of some red stain upon the coat.

"This is Will Kennedy," announced the sheriff after he had introduced himself to Hazell. "He claims to have been out hunting and that it's blood from a dead rabbit which had dripped on his coat, but I don't know. It doesn't seem like he would do it, either. But he can't give any accurate account of himself. I want you to take care of him here, if you will, while I drive over to the farm. I don't like to take the chance of anything happening, for I suppose the neighbors are naturally pretty excited."

"I aint the man," Kennedy protested. Despite his rough clothes and his somewhat uncouth appearance, he had a clean, strong face, unmarked by lines of dissipation. His brown eyes faced us freely and honestly.

There was the patter of light feet from the stairway, and in an instant a girl had rushed among us and flung her arms around the man's neck. "You didn't do it, Will; you didn't, I know," she cried hysterically. Then, releasing him, she sank into a chair and buried her head in her arms, weeping.

The man rose quickly and went to her. Awkwardly he patted her hair. "I aint the man. You knowed I wouldn't do anything like that, Jannie." The tears ceased, and for a moment they spoke in low tones. Then the girl re-entered the building, and shortly after, Hazell followed with the now silent William, while the sheriff went on to the farm.

But when he returned, I could see that in his own mind he was nearly, if not entirely, convinced of Kennedy's guilt. "I guess you'll have to come along," he said. Unresisting, the prisoner allowed the handcuffs to be placed upon him, and took his seat in the buggy for the ten-mile drive to the county-seat. The girl did not know of his departure.

"It weren't no burglar," explained the sheriff. "There aint nothing gone; why, we even found four hundred dollars in bills stuffed behind the clock. And there aint been any strangers about that's been seen. Kennedy's the only one who would have wanted to have done it. He and the old woman had some scores to settle about the girl."

After supper we sat in the long twilight, gazing out over the shining surface of the lake, mottled with flashes of brilliant color as the sun passed beyond the line of distant forest. Yet I knew that Hazell was unaware of the beauty of the scene, for he puffed at his cigar vindictively, as if blaming it for the solution which would not come.

"I'm going to talk to the girl," he announced, rising suddenly. "Come along if you care to."

We found her in the kitchen going through her duties mechanically, the first outburst of grief passed. She was alone, the evening's work being finished. It seemed she was inventing occupation to keep her mind off the tragedy which had so suddenly darkened her young life.

"I believe in your lover, Miss Blessing," Hazell said kindly, and yet seriously. "I am well satisfied myself that he did not commit the crime; and what's more, I'm going to do all in my power to prove him innocent."

"Oh, I know he didn't," the girl cried. "He couldn't have! It's so good to hear you say so, though. Everyone else seems to think he killed grandma. I don't care for her old money," she exclaimed passionately, "and I told Will so. Will and I were going to be so happy when he got his farm."

There were no more tears, and Hazell questioned her carefully about her life on the farm, the habits of her grandmother, and, in particular, about the quarrel between Mrs. Blessing and Crumble.

"I'm absolutely convinced," Hazell announced when we were again on the porch, "that Kennedy had nothing whatever to do with the crime. He's been arrested simply because he's the only one, through his sweetheart, who would be directly interested in the death of the old lady. That's all, coupled with the unfortunate fact of his having no alibi. But what they overlook, what no one seems to regard as particularly strange, is the unaccountable ferocity of the crime. Perhaps, unused to scenes of violence, the rural mind imagines that all murders are as horrible as this one. But we know that this hacking and mutilating of a body without shadow of

reason, in broad daylight must be the work of a maniac, or—" His words ended abruptly in some suggested trail of thought, and I left him brooding over cigar after cigar, far into the night.

When I arose at seven in the morning, Hazell was already gone. I met him at breakfast, however, his face a shining contrast to the baffled uncertainty of the night before.

"Hurry through, Roy, I've something to show you. See if you can find a couple of stout canes; they may be useful."

Again we followed the road, but this time without turning in at the Blessing farm. "The solution is not there," Hazell said briefly. We passed the rail fence that marked the beginning of the Crumble acres and entered the meadow, climbing a stone wall. The land was lower and less sandy, the clover growing thick.

Half-way across, a large white ram was chopping the blossoms. As we approached, the animal retreated, lowering its head threateningly, but the cane in Hazell's hand made it appear to hesitate. It was an ugly looking brute, strangely mottled here and there with splashes of dark red.

"Don't you see it?" Hazell questioned excitedly. "The blood on the fleece. Look at the horns. Heaven be thanked, there has been no rain to wash it away. There's the actual perpetrator of the deed at least!"

As the ram slowly backed as if to charge, lowering his massive, wicked-looking head, and we discreetly retreated, I could well believe it was as my friend stated. Certainly it was possible for the beast to severely injure and even kill a man in his full strength—how much more so an old woman of eighty years.

"I went over the premises carefully again this morning, and as a result, I found a bit of fleece caught in the screen of the front door. It might have been lodged by the wind, and then again I reasoned it was possible for the animal to have been there. I had thought of a vicious horse or a bull, though neither would quite fit the facts in the case, but though I questioned carefully I could

not find that any such animals were kept in the neighborhood.

"The bit of fleece pointed to the criminal. I found that Crumble owned a ram and the rest was easy. The injuries, the battering of the face and head, were such as would have been caused by the terrible impact of the ram's lowered head. My theory is that the old lady encountered the animal at the moment when she was trying to open the front door. The catch had caught and resisted her every effort. The ram must have thrown her against the door, tearing her face against the jagged hole in the screen. Unable to force the catch, it seems that she made an effort to crawl into the open window, the ram pursuing and attacking again and again. Failing in this, despite her fearful injuries, she staggered across the fifty feet separating the house from the cowshed in a frenzied effort to escape."

"But how do you explain the latched door, the string fastened around the nail on the wall?"

"It must have been the last act of the poor old woman before she fell unconscious. The human frame clings to life tenaciously, Roy."

While Hazell was explaining his theories to me, we had arrived at the farm. There in the presence of the coroner and the constable he demonstrated the proofs of his assertions. They were at least half convinced, agreeing to delay the inquest until an examination

should tell whether or not the stains on the fleece were those of human blood.

Two days later, and with the report of the chemist, all doubt was dispelled. The young man, triumphantly vindicated, was freed. His neighbors who had been most vehement in their accusations were the first to assure him that they all along had been convinced of his innocence. But in his Jannie, Kennedy knew that he had a believer. The two clumsily stammered their thanks to Hazell, but he laughed the matter away. "Nothing at all," he said, "just the necessary zest for our vacation, Roy."

But that night, when once more we were bass fishing in the cool half-light of the forest-shadowed bayou, he came again to the subject. "It's just as Doyle said, Roy, the slumbering, deep-rooted animosity which lurks in the lonely places. The woman is dead and we won't speak of her; if for no reason, because she did not after all make a new will, and brave little Janet and her lover will have enough to make them happy and contented, I trust."

But it did occur to us to question just why the fence rail happened to be down so that the vicious ram could so easily wander through. It was not the woman's doing, for she lived, as I have found, in fear of the animal. No, the ram was the instrument, but not the murderer. That was the man who let down the fence. But of course we can't prove it.

The Ulterior Motive

By RICHARD BARKER SHELTON

TO THE world at large it is a matter of small moment whether or not Tolman's Cove has a larger assessed valuation than Clayville; nor does it matter much whether the clock on the Odd Fellows Building in Clayville or the one on the Baptist church

at Tolman's Cove is the more accurate as a timekeeper, nor which one has a bell of the clearer tone; nor yet is it a thing of more than purely local interest as to which stores carry the best and cheapest line of merchandise—those of the Cove or those of Clayville.

Indeed, if you have ever been to Tolman's Cove and then journeyed on to Clayville, which is the next town to the north on the Maine coast, you will wonder what superior points can be found in either. To the casual observer both seem on an equal level of deadness and stagnation.

But if you sojourn long enough in either—which, Heaven send will never be your misfortune—you will discover among the inhabitants of each village a militant civic spirit—so far as championing their own township with much heated argument is concerned—and a very potent jealousy in each of the adjacent villages.

Steve Towle, second mate of the big five-masted coastwise schooner *Mattie Lane*, hailed from Tolman's Cove; Sammy Gould, who in a long, dingy apron and a cap in nowise spotless, did things to the provisions in the galley and therefore passed as cook on the same vessel, had first seen the light of day in Clayville. Moreover, the militant, hot-air civic spirit already mentioned, ran high in each of them. And this very naturally meant trouble.

Long ago had the crews of the *Mattie Lane* learned on quiet days when there was little to be done by the watch on deck, to cluster round the galley where Steve and Sammy were sure to be waging their windy war, arguing childishly, ripping out impressive oaths to back their assertions, and calling each other names which were neither pretty, polite nor at all complimentary to their forbears.

The crew always enjoyed these encounters immensely; and since the arguments always ran over the same ground, and each contestant had an equal number of telling verbal shots, they invariably ended in a draw, when Steve was called on deck or Sammy had to serve the dinner.

So far the battle had been purely wordy although once when the second mate and the cook were left alone on the schooner as she lay at her dock, the skipper, returning late at night, found Sammy with a beautiful black eye, and the second mate, badly tattered as to raiment, with many clawing scratches upon his ruddy visage; but Sammy ac-

counted for his appearance with a halting explanation of a bump against a stanchion in the dark; and Steve said he had tripped over a coil of sheets in going forward. So there the matter rested, although the grinning skipper had his private ideas as to the true inwardness of matters.

But the increasing luridness of the epithets each applied to the other after that, and the manner in which their voices rose to the breaking point in subsequent arguments, boded no particular good. That it was only a question of time when the belligerents would swap their tongue lashings for more material and perhaps more dangerous weapons, everyone knew, from the skipper down to Ole Swenson in the forecabin.

On a certain November day—one of those days when the clear-cut, flawless air presages bad weather, Steve, slouching past the galley, paused for a word with Sammy, who had just come on deck to empty overside a big pan of potato peelings. Since there was but one topic of conversation for them, they fell to with considerable vigor; at first with sardonic banterings, as subtle in their intent as an elephant trying to walk a tight-rope; followed the usual heated argument, the usual time-worn taunts and gibes. Then as the cook had to descend to the galley to attend to the dinner, cooking on the range, Steve slouched after him, and the wordy strife went on in the galley.

No one paid any particular attention to it; it had come to be so common a thing that the wrath-choked voices drifting up the galley-companionway caused no comment, beyond the man on lookout grinning delightedly and batting a knowing eyelid at two men off watch, who were puffing their pipes in the lee of the forward house.

But presently there entered a new note into the strife. The voices came forth in inarticulate howls; thuds and grunts followed; and then came the sound of heavy, bumping bodies, and the rattle of pots and pans jolted down from their hooks. Moreover some one in there was breathing wheezily, as if clutching fingers were obstructing his breath, and the steady thud of metal on some hard substance spoke volumes.

The first mate, whose watch on deck it was, slid hurriedly from his comfortable perch on the coamings of the after house, and sped forward towards the galley; and even as he ran, the skipper, aroused by the din, came tumbling to the deck from below, and puffed along in the mate's wake.

The galley, when they reached it, was a mess. The big kettle of stew for dinner had been upset, and its contents, burning on the range top, filled the place with a pungent and most unsavory smoke. Pots and pans littered the floor; the dented nickel tea-kettle had rolled into a far corner. By the coal box were two swaying figures. Steve had the cook by the throat, doing his best to choke him into submission, and the cook, by way of dying game, had caught up an agate ware skillet, and with this he was belaboring the second mate over the head with all his waning strength. The cook's throaty wheezes and the snarls from Steve whenever the skillet descended, made a din most unpleasant to sensitive ears.

The mate grabbed the cook and the skipper laid hands on his second mate, and by dint of much effort the struggling pair were forced apart, each begging his captor to let him get back to the fray. By exerting all his strength the skipper managed to half-boost, half-drag his captive to the deck.

"Pretty goin'-on, these, aint they?" he grunted disgustedly at the raging Steve. "I'll give the pair of yer all that's comin' to yer if this ever happens again. Now you git aft. Go below and stay there for a while till you cool off. No, yer don't!" he ended, making a savage clutch at the second mate as the latter tried to slip past him into the galley again. "Aft with yer! You hear? Now git!"

He gave the man before him a mighty push which sent him lurching down the deck, and dropped back into the galley for a word with the cook.

"You git busy and clear up this mess," he ordered the wheezing Sammy, who with protruding eyes and a chalky face was gingerly fingering his throat. "You aint hurt none, not as much as I wisht you was. Clean up this mess and get to work on the dinner—

and if you're so much as a minute late with it, darned if I wont turn to and bile yer in one of yer own kittles. I'll see whether we're goin' to have any sech actions aboard this schooner. Hustle, now!"

"Cussed fools!" the skipper grunted to 'the first mate, as he and the latter came back to the deck. "I'll put a stop to this. Lemme hear 'em begin their kiddish arguin' again and I'll make 'em both wish they'd been born dumb."

Seated by the table in the forward cabin, whither he had betaken himself, Steve Towle rubbed his aching head, on which already lumps the size of an egg were beginning to stand out, and meditated darkly; while in the galley Sammy Gould began making a fresh pot of stew, and as he worked muttering to himself threats of dire vengeance against the second mate.

After dinner that day, the boding change of weather came on. Over the sky crept a film of blurry clouds; a thin vapor crept up from the sea, thickening anon, until at dusk they were wrapped in a blinding pall of fog, which bit to the bone with its chill. So dense was it that the lookout forward was completely hidden from the man at the wheel. At regular intervals the hand-horn blared and blatted its warning, its hoarse voice sounding its dismal admonition through the cold mist.

Steve tumbled out of his berth near midnight and came on deck to take his watch. Striding forward, he beheld the cook leaning over the port rail. The cook, seeing him approaching, had the forethought to catch up a handspike, in case of emergency. Also, his teeth were bared in a snarl of hate.

"Thought yer could choke me inter admittin' yer darned old valuation run up to a hundred thousand at Tolman's Cove last year, didn't yer?" he muttered. "Yer know darned well yer was lyin' when yer said it. Come on now, if yer want to finish out the trouble, I'm ready for yer!"

"Yah! Had to git a handspike, didn't yer?" taunted Steve. "Well, I don't need no handspike. Anyone that comes from the Cove is plenty able to take care of himself with the two good

weepons nature give him. I'll show yer, handspike and all."

He leaped forward, but the threat was doomed to go for the time unfulfilled. Out of the gloom, so near that it seemed close aboard, came the ear-splitting shriek of a steamer's siren. Simultaneously lights showed to starboard. There was a howl from the cook, an inarticulate yell from Steve, a terrific impact, the crash of riven wood and the snap of rending rigging.

The next Steve knew he was in the water, going down, down and ever down. An age, it seemed, he spun and twisted in that giant whirlpool beneath the water; then came a swift upward rush, the surface, the God-given air in his lungs again. He choked and sputtered and pulled it in in great gulps, as if he were drinking it. A bit of wreckage bumped against him—an all too tiny bit, to be sure—still, enough to help. He clutched it and held it fast. Somewhere in the distance through the fog he could hear dim shouts, but about him all was gray darkness.

Then close at hand came a feeble, choking wail. Dimly he saw a bobbing round patch which might by the merest possibility be a human head. He put out a hand and clutched it desperately. His fingers closed upon hair; he drew it towards him, beholding dimly the blanched face of Sammy Gould.

Something bumped against his arm. He could have shouted for joy, for it was the big cover of the wheel-box. He climbed onto it, pulling the all but unconscious Sammy after him. They drifted away in the darkness, grasping tight the slippery edges of their precarious raft.

On the chance of being picked up by one of the steamer's boats, Steve yelled at the top of his voice until his throat was hoarse and he had no more breath with which to shout. Sammy, cowering on the wet cover, was moaning wretchedly, and now and again sobbing outright.

Steve could feel him shiver and shake and he could hear the awful chattering of Sammy's teeth.

"Buck up!" he said, and hauling off his soggy jacket, he pulled it onto the protesting cook.

"Yer need it more'n I do," he said. "I aint so awful cold yet. Look in the right hand pocket and see'f there aint some mittens."

Sammy fumbled in the pocket and pulled out the wet and soggy red wool mittens, but so stiff and numb were his fingers that he could not get them on; so Steve, with considerable effort, did it for him.

"Now then, sit tight and keep yer nerve," he advised. "We're goin' to git out of this. Wait till mornin'! Some one's goin' to see us and take us off'n this. We aint dead yet. Time to give up when we are."

But Sammy only moaned incoherently and shivered and chattered his teeth more loudly.

It was an endless night. Towards the last of it, just before the first gray light began to brighten the east, Steve had to chafe Sammy's arms and legs, and punch and thump him with all his feeble strength to get any sign of life out of him.

Day broke with gray clouds hanging in a sullen sky but with the fog lifted. Steve, scanning the gray water with eyes which could scarcely see, suddenly gave vent to a choking whoop. There ahead, was a bit of rock, and rising from it a gray stone tower.

"Gull Rock Light! Gull Rock Light!" Steve muttered. "That is, if I see right," he added, scarce daring to believe his eyes. He fell to chafing Sammy's arms and to prodding him with all his feeble strength.

The keeper of Gull Rock Light and his first assistant saw the bobbing spot on the face of the gray water. When they got to it in the boat they found one man, all but lifeless, and another chafing him and muttering wildly to himself. As they lifted the pair from the boat at the landing on the rock, Steve stood up. He caught the keeper by the sleeve.

"We're off the *Mattie Lane*," he muttered thickly. "Steamer run us down about midnight last night. I'm the second mate and this is the cook. Say, don't let him die. Don't let him! You gotter save him! After all I done to keep him alive, don't let him die."

Then he reeled and fell limp into the light keeper's arms.

It was early evening before Sammy recovered consciousness. He lay in a little white iron bed in one of the upper rooms of the keeper's house on Gull Rock. His head and his hands and his feet were all bandaged heavily. A man, whom he learned by discreet questioning, was the second assistant keeper of the Gull Rock Light, was sitting by him.

"Narrer squeak of it, old hoss," said the second assistant cheerfully. "You wouldn't 'a' made it if that other feller, the second mate that was with yer on that wheel-box cover, hadn't 'a' kept a-chafin' and a-punchin' of yer."

"How—how is *he*?" asked Sammy apprehensively.

"Comin' round fit as a fiddle in a day or so," said the other. "He's right in the next room to yer here. Say, you and him must be great pals. You'd oughter heard him a-beggin' of us not to let yer die when we brought yer ashore this mornin'. Yep, grabbed the old man by the arm, he did, and kep' a-pleadin'. 'Don't let that other feller die, not after all I've done to keep him alive. Don't let him die,' says he, over and over, jest like that."

"He said *that*?" asked Sammy.

"Dead sure he did." The other pulled out his watch. "Say, you have a little nap, now you've come to and are feelin' better. I'm goin' down to git a bite of supper. You lay right still here and I'll bring you up something that'll taste good to yer in a bit."

"Sure! Go ahead and eat," said Sammy.

The second assistant slipped out of the room, leaving Sammy alone.

No sooner had the sound of his footsteps died away on the stairs outside, than Sammy gingerly slipped back the bed covering and cautiously put first one bandaged foot out of the bed and then the other.

Very groggily he stood up, clung hard to the bedpost for a moment until the overpowering giddiness which gripped him should pass away; then he wobbled uncertainly to the door.

Noiselessly he opened the door and

pattered into the hall. Just beyond was another door ajar. Sammy pushed it open and staggered into the room. There on the bed, propped up with pillows and almost as much be-bandaged as himself, was Steve Towle.

"Steve," said Sammy chokingly, "they told me what you done for me. Gee, Steve, I never thought—"

Steve interrupted him by sitting up straight. He grinned broadly. The bandages on his face made the grin rather grewsome.

"They never told yer why I done it, I guess. They never told yer why I begged 'em not to let yer die, most probably," said he. "Blast yer, yer pie-eyed, knock-kneed Clayviller, I wa'n't a-goin' to have yer die till yer knowed that Tolman's Cove did have an assessed valuation of one hundred and thirty-eight thousand, eight hundred and fifty-two dollars and seventy-four cents, as against less'n ninety thousand for Clayville. And I can prove it to yer, too. Tolman's Cove is leavin' Clayville so fur astern—"

"Them figgers you mention was padded and yer know it," said Sammy shrilly.

"They wa'n't, neither."

"That's a lie."

"No herrin'-eatin' Clayviller is goin' to call *me* a liar."

"Well, here's one feller from the neatest little town on the Maine coast that does."

The uproar brought the keeper and the second assistant keeper flying upstairs from the supper table. Steve had Sammy down on the floor and was choking him unmercifully.

"Yer say them figger's was right, and that Tolman's Cove is a purtier place than yer darned old Clayville mud-hole, and that our clock has got it all over your'n and I'll let yer up. Say it, or by thunder I'll choke the life out'n yer!"

They pried them, panting, apart. Their bandages were torn off; Steve's nose was bloody.

"Well, wouldn't this jest about cook yer?" gasped the horrified second assistant, who was something of a sentimentalist in his way.



The Strange Cases of Dr. Wycherley

By
By MAX RITTENBERG



A PSYCHIC STRUGGLE of the deepest fascination is the theme of this engrossing story. A famous man falls under the spell of a woman who works for his downfall. Dr. Wycherley becomes interested, and by a curious device contrives to save the situation. One of the most attractive tales of this splendid series.

No. XII—THE FORTIETH MILESTONE

THERE is, of course, no such name in British politics as the Right Hon. Travis Kennion. Nor has there yet been introduced into Parliament a Bill for the Segregation of the Unfit.

But behind this deliberate disguise of names and places lies the story of a fight for a man's soul—a man great in many respects and with ideals pitched high, yet with one kink of character which threatened to ruin his career and to cut short the splendid services he has rendered to his nation. Strangely enough, Kennion himself does not know the full story of the fight, nor does his wife, though she half guesses.

The two men had toiled up the great green hump of Medenham Down, and now they stood on its summit, where the hill breaks away sheer into a chalk cliff fronting the fertile plain of the Weald of Kent. Many hundred feet below, it drowsed in the sunshine of a Sunday afternoon in Summer, breathing of tranquillity and contentment and the peace of humble work carried out dutifully by simple, upright, God-fearing country-folk.

But on the summit above, was raging a conflict of emotion and will between

two men of complex temperament whose work lay high in the world's esteem. The one was Travis Kennion, Home Secretary, a man of forty; the other was his friend Hatchard, a leader at the Bar, some years older.

"I've brought you up here," said the K. C., "to try to make you realize your position. Socially and politically, you're standing on the brink of a precipice. A few steps more"—he pointed to the cliff at their feet—"and you go down to perdition."

"Analogies," replied Kennion wearily, as he stretched himself on the close-cropped turf, "are all false. No one situation is like any other. I do not admit the precipice in my case."

"But you've seen the same situation in the cases of other men. Parnell and Kitty O'Shea, for instance. The lure of a bright eye, and the man throws over position, power, the world's respect, and everything that makes life worth living. As soon as your affair becomes generally known—and it's bound to leak out soon—your parliamentary career will be made impossible for you. It's sheer madness to go on!"

"A very beautiful madness," mused Kennion.

"Who is the woman?" asked Hatchard sharply. It was in a motor-car that he had seen her, at night-time, and a motor-veil and goggles make ample disguise. All he knew was that she was a woman of their own world, and that his friend was passionately in love with her.

The Home Secretary made no reply. This was not the first time he had been questioned and cross-questioned and reasoned with by the K. C., and he was weary of it all—obstinately, fiercely weary of it.

"If there's no consideration of duty to your party that will move you, think at least of your wife!"

At that Kennion blazed up into sudden anger. "Leave my wife out of it!" he ordered. "You don't understand, and never will! My temperament is so complex that I scarcely understand it myself. I am like a tulip bulb—one covering under another, one under another, right down to a tiny core. At that core is love and respect for my wife. *This*"—his reference was plain—"this belongs to another layer of my nature."

The K. C. regarded him gravely. "Slough it off," he admonished.

The sudden blaze of anger had died down, and a great weariness had now come into Kennion's voice as he replied: "I can't. I don't think I want to. I only want to be left alone. I've been sleeping badly of late, and I'm tired. There's the worry of my Bill. Is it worth while thrashing it through in face of all the opposition it has roused? That is what I ask myself. Haven't I done enough for my country? Is the fight worth while?"

His voice trailed away.

From far below, came the silvery tinkle of bells from the cattle in the lush pastures, and a lark caroled high in the heavens. The fertile Weald lay drowsing in the summer sunshine, breathing of tranquillity and contentment and peace. Into the soul of the Home Secretary crept a great longing to go down into the lush meadowland of life, to give up the fight on the heights and find peace with the woman he loved. To find peace.

Presently he slept.

Hatchard had wandered off moodily across Medenham Down, cutting with his stick at the heads of the yellow ragwort. If it would have done any good, he would have thrashed his friend to bring him to a realization of his madness. The lure of a bright eye, and a great man like Travis Kennion was to sacrifice position, power, wife, friends, and his worth to the nation! No logic seemed to move him one iota. Who could battle with such essence of unreason?

In this mood, concentrating fiercely on his own thoughts, he almost stumbled into Dr. Xavier Wycherley, the psychologist, sitting in the shade of a furze-bush and studying a note-book half filled with tiny sketches of men and women—delicate little miniatures where every line expressed inner character.

The K. C. had met him before, in connection with the strange case of "The Errand of Death," where the psychologist had helped him to save an innocent man on trial for a murder he had never knowingly committed. He greeted Dr. Wycherley cordially, and asked what brought him to Medenham Down.

"The Wishing Well at Tildenstone," answered the psychologist. "A pleasant example of faith-cure—ordinary, perhaps, yet with points of interest. I have been studying a crippled boy in the village who has suddenly regained the use of his limbs. But what brings you up here? Ah, I see, something more than idle pleasure. I sense the aftermath of a storm. You have been doing battle."

"You are right. And I have lost," answered the K. C. And then a sudden idea struck him. "Could *you* take on the fight?"

"Is it within my province?"

"I'll explain, and then you can judge. Of course, what I am going to tell you will be in strictest confidence."

He went into the matter in abundant detail, telling of the situation as he knew it, and his fruitless reasonings with the Home Secretary.

"A fine man," commented Dr. Wycherley. "I have the warmest admiration for his work. A statesman—and

England has too few statesmen and leaders. Yes, a man thoroughly worth saving from his baser self."

"Can you save him?"

"I can promise nothing. The problem as you set it before me is the most difficult I have ever had to solve."

"This weakness is the unforgivable one for a politician. Remember Parnell and Kitty O'Shea, and many a lesser man too! The English public is abominably hypocritical over such affairs."

"There I cannot agree with you. Men to whom power and influence are entrusted, are no longer private men. They are placed on a pedestal and are expected to live on a high plane. It is one of the make-weights of power—penalty of position."

"The public attitude is utterly illogical," argued the K. C. "How can a man's private character affect the value of his public work?"

"Illogical, perhaps; but then it is sometimes extremely sensible to be illogical. That is life. You know it from your practice at the Bar. Now when can I meet Kennion?"

"He is over there above the chalk cliff, but asleep, at the moment."

"Excellent! A man asleep is a man unmasked. Let us go and study him."

They walked across the Down, and for a long time Dr. Wycherley bent over the sleeping man, reading into the lines of his face and gathering impressions of his thoughts that surged out vaguely from his tumbled dreams.

At length the psychologist arose and drew the barrister aside. "I see one bare possibility," he said. "You told me a little while ago that unless he has convinced himself, it would seem hopeless to try to convince him. I confirm that view."

"Well?"

"*We must get him to convince himself.*"

"You have some plan?"

"The dawn of a plan. You are both staying, you told me, at 'The George Inn' at Medenham. This evening I will arrive there as a casual visitor, and you will introduce me, not as a mental practitioner, but merely as a man with a special gift of inducing sleep. It is vital that he should not know who I am."

"The George Inn" at Medenham is one of those delightful old hostelrys still to be found in the small country towns and some of the villages of rural England. It lies bowered in roses and clambering wisteria and honeysuckle, under the shadow of great oak trees at the foot of Medenham Down. Near by, runs the silver Meden, fished by the anglers who come to stay at "The George."

Both the Home Secretary and the barrister had brought rods with them for their week-end stay, and there was no surprise at the arrival in the evening of a silver-haired old man with keen-cut features and dark, grave eyes. No doubt he was also an angler.

Hatchard recognized him as an acquaintance and introduced him to the Home Secretary, and in the starlight they sat out on the porch and chatted leisurely of things that mattered little. But under all this casual conversation—too trivial to need recording—ran strange undercurrents of thought. Early in the evening, the Home Secretary had received a telegram. This lay in the outer pocket of his lounge coat, and every now and then his fingers would caress it under cover of the pocket. With the studied calmness of his face—the mask of the man of position—went a bright glitter of the eyes that could not be kept under. While he chatted leisurely on the porch of the inn, his real thoughts were elsewhere, with the woman he loved.

The barrister, also outwardly calm, was watching eagerly for the unfolding of Dr. Wycherley's plan, whatever it might be. All that had been arranged was that Hatchard should support the psychologist in any move he might introduce. Dr. Wycherley, for his part, had kept conversation on the level of the trivial, so that Kennion should not suspect his real vocation and draw back into an unassailable shell of defense. First, it was necessary that he win confidence. Later—

What was that strange sensation, that sense of something impending in the immediate present? It came to the sensitive mind of Dr. Wycherley as a rasping against the calm ether of the starlit night in the quiet village.

Most of us experience that vague sensation of impending events at one time or other, and sometimes we act upon it against the logic of our reasoning faculties. Dr. Wycherley, with his super-sensitive perceptions, knew better than to neglect the warnings of intuition. He had schooled himself to respect and follow intuition, and in this case he made an excuse to the other two men and set out to walk to the end of the village, out into the road which connects by a tangle of lanes with the broad highway of the London-Canterbury road. From that direction he sensed the coming of some event which would cut sharply into the peace of the village inn.

Rounding a corner between the high hedges, the glare of a motor-lamp flashed full upon him, and a car braked up on its haunches with a grinding of wheels.

"Is this right for Medenham?" asked the chauffeur. "We've got mixed up in these twisty lanes."

But Dr. Wycherley's eyes had turned to the solitary occupant of the car, a lady. Her veil was thrown back to let the cool night air play on her face, and with a shock he recognized her as Lilith Kennion, the wife of the Home Secretary. The portrait of the beautiful Mrs. Kennion by Shannon had been one of the features of that year's Academy—she, as well as her husband, was a celebrity. But now there were lines of pain and anxiety in her face, and in a flash Dr. Wycherley realized that she had come to a knowledge of the situation in which her husband stood and was pressing hot-haste to his side. In the present mood of the Home Secretary, the meeting would inevitably lead to a clash of wills, perhaps to an open declaration from which there would be no turning back. The situation lay poised so delicately that one jar would send the balance crashing downwards.

"This is the way to Medenham," replied Dr. Wycherley, "but I wish to speak first with Mrs. Kennion." He raised his hat with an old-world courtesy of manner. "I have something very important to say to you—something vital. Will you spare me a moment?"

"Who are you?" asked Lilith Kennion.

"A medical adviser of your husband's," was the answer, whispered so that it might not come to the ears of the chauffeur. "More than that, a very sincere well-wisher. Will you not send the car ahead, and let us rejoin it presently?"

There was a magnetism in the personality of the psychologist that few could resist. His gently-expressed wishes had more than the force of commands. Lilith Kennion realized the sincerity of this stranger with the silvery hair and grave, dark eyes, and told her chauffeur to drive on for a hundred yards or so and wait.

When the car had moved off, they looked at one another in silence for a few moments. Dr. Wycherley struck a match and held it up to his own face, so that she might read what he did not wish to put into words.

"You know why I am here? You came to intercept me?" she asked, with a break in her voice that held pathos.

"I know. I sympathize deeply. I have a plan to help Mr. Kennion against his—his insomnia. If you will trust him to me for a few days—*trust him implicitly*—I think you will not regret it. He will sleep well; his nerves will right themselves; he will come back to you with renewed strength and courage for his fight. Again he will be a strong man, doing battle for his Bill against the weak sentimentalists and the envy and malice of public life."

"I could help him—perhaps."

"You cannot help him directly—you or anyone else. He has to fight himself, to conquer himself. Strength must come from inside. My plan is to help him to help himself, without his knowing it."

"And I? What am I to do?" Her voice quivered under the strain of belief he was demanding.

"It would be best for you to go away for these few days—far away. To Scotland, say. It is a big sacrifice I am asking of you. But you, like your husband, are on the pedestal of power, and much is demanded from those to whom much is given."

"I don't want power," she burst out

impulsively. "I want only—my husband. The rest is emptiness."

The glory of the starlit night wrapped itself around them—the meretricious glitter of the great city with its strivings and strugglings was far away. She began to weep very softly and pitifully.

Then with a sudden effort, Lilith Kennion drew herself together. "I will trust you," she said bravely, and held out her hand.

Dr. Wycherley raised it to his lips, then went to call the car back.

A little later he had returned to the flower-banked porch of "The George," and soon he had managed to introduce the topic of the mystery of sleep. Kennion mentioned wearily that he had been sleeping very badly of late, and the barrister, taking the opening, spoke of his friend's powers to induce sleep.

"If you wish for sound sleep, I can give it you," said Dr. Wycherley.

"I have heard of that kind of thing," returned Kennion. "It sounds to me dangerous."

"It rests with yourself. I do not press my gifts," returned Dr. Wycherley. "To-morrow I shall be tramping on, and we shall probably not meet again. If you wish to break the chain of sleepless nights, I can do it for you now, but not to-morrow night." There was soothing in the voice, and Kennion felt drawn to confidence.

He accepted the offer, and presently in the bedroom Dr. Wycherley passed him into the lighter stages of hypnosis.

"And now?" whispered the barrister.

"Now leave us. What I have to do should rest secret even from a friend."

Far into the night the mental healer sat by the bedside of the Home Secretary, speaking softly to the sleeping man, of many, many things which he should know and realize.

The next morning Kennion slept late. Before he awoke, Dr. Wycherley had left the village. The barrister had to return to town for his work, but the Home Secretary announced that he would stay on at Medenham for a few days, to fish peacefully and build up his nerves. Though he had slept heavily, he had been troubled by dreams,

and he wanted his brain to be thoroughly clear for his parliamentary duties. For a couple of days his Under-Secretary could take his place.

Hatchard listened to this skeptically. He had his own idea as to why Kennion wished to bury himself in the country, but Dr. Wycherley had insisted implicitly that Kennion should be allowed to work out his own salvation according to his own dictates.

When the barrister had left for London, Kennion made his way to the post office and sent off two long, cipher telegrams. One was addressed to the Under-Secretary, the other to a woman. Also he telegraphed to his wife to let her know that he would not be back in town at present.

Later, he took up his rod and flies and went off to the quiet pools of the silver Meden. But his thoughts were not in harmony with the quiet beauty of the rural scene. They buzzed within him, burst up into flame, died down into cold analysis, flared again into impetuous desires. The dreams of last night haunted him vividly and warred with his desires. They had been so extremely real—detailed far beyond the usual vaguenesses of dreamland. They *haunted* him.

In a fever of impatience—at one moment aflame, the next cold and shivering—he waited for the reply which should come to one of his three telegrams. He returned early to the inn, without a catch, to receive the answering wire.

It had not come. It did not arrive, in fact, until late in the afternoon, and when it came he crumpled it up feverishly in his hands.

"Wait," it said in cipher. "*To-morrow night, on the Canterbury road, by the fortieth milestone.*"

He must perforce wait—and think—and do battle with his thoughts.

That evening he tramped alone far over the swelling downs, and at midnight he lay down exhausted beside a furze-bush and fell into a deep sleep. A sheep-dog came up and nosed him curiously, then moved away. Another of those tramps, no doubt.

Kennion slept heavily, and again there came to him a series of dreams

of a vividness that had never previously been within his experience. He awoke at dawn in the cold gray hill-mists, bathed in sweat, and with a mocking voice ringing in his ears:

"Who are the Unfit?"

If the day before had been a battle, to-day was an agony of conflict. Duty—desire! Duty—desire! The heights or the meadowland? Which must he choose, for the peace that would be lasting? His mind was stretched taut on a rack of his own devising.

And he was alone. No outside influence was there to throw weight into one pan or other of the balance. On himself alone rested the decision.

With his complex nature, this thought gave him strength rather than weakness. It is so with many of the world's great men, as Dr. Wycherley knew well.

By the fortieth milestone, the white highway curves in between the swelling downs and traverses a narrow neck half-way up the hills.

The night was hot and sultry and working up to storm as the Home Secretary went to keep tryst with the woman he loved. She had arrived before him, having left her motor-car on the farther side of the hills and walked back on foot. She was young and dazzlingly beautiful. When he came to her side, she gave a little cry of gladness and held out her arms. No one was in sight—the curves of the road gave them solitude.

But Kennion did not take her in his arms.

"Come to where we can talk without interruption," he said, and pointed to a chalk quarry near at hand.

They went together, in silence.

"This is to say good-by," he said with a curtness that scarcely masked the surge of feeling within him.

"No, not good-by," she urged, and twined her arms around his shoulder. Her warm breath was on his cheek; the soft curves of her body rose and fell seductively.

But Kennion untwined her clasp with hands that trembled, and repeated: "It is good-by, Vivien. I have decided—for us both."

"Why?" There was sharpness in her voice now—the sharpness of a woman balked in desire. "I have the right to know."

"Yes, you have the right to know. I have seen many things these last two nights."

"Nights!"

"I saw the whisperings in the lobby, the furtive glances. Men looked away when I looked to them to nod greeting. Then I rose in the House to move the third reading of my Bill for the Segregation of the Unfit. There was icy silence. I went through my speech red-hot with passionate enthusiasm for the great service this Bill would render to the Nation; but the House was icy. It was as though I were in the dock, and they were my judges. They put up Leveredge to oppose. His speech was mordant—bitingly mocking. 'Who are the Unfit?' he flung at me across the floor of the House. They threw out the Bill. Even my own friends went into the lobby against me—"

"Dreams!" she cut in with a whip-lash of scorn. "And even suppose you lost all that for me. Would it not be worth it? We would go away together to where the world mattered nothing."

"We went away together. We left Lilith breaking her heart against the iron cruelty of society. We went away together to some distant isle under a tropic sky. The world around us was marvelously beautiful, but there was no satisfaction in its beauty. Feverishly we drowned our hatred of its beauty in the madness of love. There were hectic oases in a desert of meaningless sand. We pretended that the world mattered nothing—that we were all in all to one another. But it was pretense, and we began slowly to loathe one another for the pretense forced upon us. I saw the loathing in your eyes; you in mine. The days grew long to a length insufferable—they dragged out into æons of time—"

"Who has been putting these notions into your head?" she asked sharply. "Dreams do not come of themselves."

"No one. That is the vital point of it all. Hatchard had argued with me in his barrister-like way, but it left me

unmoved. I am not a man to go to another for help in the big decisions. No, Vivien; for two days I have scarcely spoken to a soul, and yet these dreams came to me with a vividness that was appalling. And at last I realized." He paused.

"Realized what?"

"That they came from myself—*myself alone*. That they were the inmost thoughts of my complex being—the glimpse of the future that only the inmost mind can perceive. They were myself speaking to myself." His voice was ringing now with conviction—the balance had swung definitely, decisively downwards towards the scale of duty. "But what I have told you is not one tenth of all the visions of the future that crowded in upon me. The wretched beings cursed by heredity—the still more wretched offspring of their marriages—the scrofulous, the crook-backed, the epileptic, the paralyzed, the imbecile that came into being because my Bill did not pass—they stretched out in endless phantasmagoria that tore at my heart-strings. They looked towards me in silence as they passed by, one by one. They *haunt* me!"

A low growl of thunder eddied and echoed among the hills.

"Come!" she said tensely, and plucked at his arm. "Come before the storm breaks. My car is below the hill. We will talk of this again when we are in shelter. There is a cottage in the Weald I have rented. We shall be alone there. Then we can talk over this in comfort."

"In comfort? No, the decision is for now. I have decided—I am going up on the heights of Medenham Down."

"With a storm breaking! You must be mad!" And she looked at him with new eyes, with a dawning horror in her eyes. "Why, you must be—your nerves must be unstrung. No man in his senses would—"

"I have never been more sane than I am at the present moment," answered Kennion. "Don't you understand my feelings after all I have told you?"

"I don't understand at all. You are supposed to be a strong man, and yet a few idle dreams—"

A blaze of lightning cut short her words. In the moment of light, the milestone stood out sharply with its "XL miles" in stark shadow against the white stone.

"Forty miles," mused Kennion. "And I have seen forty years of life. It is my milestone."

She looked at him with chilly horror, thinking now, that his reason had tottered.

"Good-by," he said firmly, and strode away and up the green hump of Medenham Down. She watched him for some moments at his steady, purposeful climb, and then she gathered up her skirts to run for shelter against the breaking storm.

But Travis Kennion strode on and up to the summit of Medenham Down, and the rain slashed at him as he stood on the topmost knoll with folded arms, immobile, dreaming great dreams of what he might do for his country in the days to come.

As to Dr. Wycherley's part in the big decision, Kennion never suspected. He could not know how the psychologist had sat by his bedside far into that Sunday night, speaking softly of the many things that had become woven into his dreams to such haunting effect. He could not know that the visions of the future conjured up by his inner consciousness were but the reflex of what had been poured into his ears during the hypnotic sleep. He had judged that they came from himself alone—he *had convinced himself*.

And Dr. Wycherley, on his side, never revealed the secret, even to Lilith Kennion. He saw the happiness of reunion; he saw Kennion's great Bill pass victoriously into law against the fiercest opposition ever known in the House of Commons; and he was content.

It was a triumph for the science of mind, and the keen joy of achievement was his.



The Suspect

By

J. TIFFANY



TOSSING the letter across the breakfast-table to his son, Jabez Titus drew in his fat lips, clasped his huge, red hands over his expansive abdomen and blew out his ruddy cheeks until he exploded in a succession of mirthful "tee-hees," which ended in a fit of coughing.

After thumping his father vigorously on the back, Job Titus resumed his seat, cracked an egg, and looked inquiringly across the table.

"Read it!—read the letter," Jabez directed.

Laying down his spoon, Job took up the letter and read its brief contents.

"Uncle Ephraim coming to see you, eh? And this is the first you have heard of him in thirty-five years. Been in Brazil. I'm glad he's coming before college re-opens. I don't see what there is so very funny in his letter."

"No—no! of course you don't! You don't see that this is just a new scheme of some of them clever New York crooks who've been trying for twenty years to get on the inside of your dad's strong-box. They've tried every way they can think of, from ordinary porch-climbing to tunneling, from the torch to the bomb. They've satisfied themselves at last that they can't do anything by siege or battery, so they're going to resort to stratagem."

"I'm afraid I don't get your meaning," Job replied.

"Of course not! You're so honest and simple; you take everybody at his word.

But I see through this letter, plain enough. Everybody in Rossberg knows the story of how Ephraim quarreled with his father and went away thirty-five years ago, to make his fortune; and everybody believes, as I do, that he's dead, long ago.

"But we never had proof of his death; so these fellows get up a scheme and write this letter. They're going to send some slick old crook to play he's brother Ephraim. He's to arrive at eight o'clock to-night. They expect I'll receive him with open arms, give him a bang-up dinner, show him into the best bedroom, and go to sleep, dreaming of my long-lost brother, while he is opening the front door to let in his pals and help them burgle the strong-room."

"That is all pure supposition, father—rather wild guessing, I should call it. Even if Uncle Ephraim has changed so much in appearance that you can't recognize him, it ought not to be a difficult matter to determine his identity."

"Oh, I'll soon satisfy myself on that point," the old man chuckled. "But I know you've made up your mind that this man is your uncle Ephraim, and I'm going to prove to you that he isn't. I'll bet you five dollars right now that he's a fake and a crook."

"All right! I take the bet. By the way, you'll have to let me have fifty this morning. I'm down to my last quarter."

"Right you are, my boy; but I shall only give you forty-five; you've forfeited that five already," Jabez chuckled.

Old Jabez Titus was the most widely known character in Rossberg. As a boy of twenty, he had lost ninety-five dollars through the failure of a local bank; and from that time, now almost forty years ago, he had been his own banker.

He never deposited a coin or its equivalent in a bank. When he received a check, he never rested until he had the money for it in his hip pocket. If the check came to him during banking hours, he would drop everything to rush off and cash it. If he received a check after the banks had closed, he would try every store in town in the effort to convert it into currency. Failing that, he would be on hand next morning, waiting for the bank to open.

In his younger days, while he was slowly piling up his first thousand dollars, he had been content to hide his hoard behind a loose baseboard at the head of his heavy walnut bed; but when the thousands began to multiply, he had bought a big steel safe, reinforced the floor of a clothes-press and had it set in there.

After having been chloroformed twice, and once knocked on the head with a bludgeon, by desperate yeggmen in their indomitable efforts to crack his safe, Titus had had his strong-room built on the ground floor.

Taking a small room off the library, he had had floor, walls and ceiling covered with two feet of concrete construction, had installed a steel vault, and equipped his strong-room with all kinds of burglar-alarms and burglar traps.

One of his most ingenious devices was a galvanic battery within the strong-room, connected with the handles of the safe. At night, before retiring, Jabez touched a switch concealed in the library chimney, and went to bed, secure in the knowledge that if a burglar laid hands on the doors of the strong-room, he would be held there, writhing and yelling, until the owner of Crow's Nest came downstairs to truss him up with ropes, before cutting off the battery.

At half-past seven on the evening of the promised visit of "brother" Ephraim, Jabez, all impatience for the appearance of the resourceful crook, took up a position in the parlor window, com-

manding full view of the gateway and the drive leading up to the front door. Near by, lolling on a Turkish sofa, Job was reading the book of the year.

"He's coming, Job—I hear a motor-car," the old man chuckled. "It's a taxi—it's stopped in front of the gate. Here he is, getting out and paying the man. Can't see his face yet. Yes—I see him now—my long-lost brother Eph! There never was a Titus as looked like that, Job. He's coming through the gate, and starting up the avenue—a burglar's kit in one hand and a satchel with a bottle of nitroglycerin in the other. Gee—but he's an artist! Gotten up like an old-fashioned bishop in a picture-book, and stopping every few yards to look around at the old place—recognizing familiar scenes of his boyhood. Ah, ah! Oh, oh! Why don't you come an' look at him, Job? You've lost that five, all right, my boy."

Dropping his book, young Titus rose and stood beside his father in the great bay window, both concealed from outside observation by the curtains.

Job saw a man of distinguished appearance—tall and slim, with bronzed face and heavy white mustache of military cut. His long, dark-gray coat was in the best of taste, and a broad-brimmed, pearl-gray hat of soft felt accentuated his foreign air.

"Said he'd been in Brazil for more than thirty years; didn't he? Guess he's gotten up to look the part, all right," the old man muttered, rubbing his hands and puffing out his cheeks.

"I don't see why this man may not be Uncle Ephraim as well as a yeggman," Job remarked, quietly.

"Of course, you don't, my boy. That's because you *are* a boy. It takes an old fellow like me to see through these artful disguises. Guess he's come prepared to spend the night; but you'll see I shall catch him tripping before he's been in the house five minutes."

"I hope you're not going to blurt out at the start that you think he's a rogue. The man looks like a gentleman."

"Wont blurt out nothing, boy. I'll be diplomatic enough. But the fact that he looks like a gentleman brands him a rogue on the face of it."

"How's that?"

"Because it takes three generations to make a gentleman, Job. Your grandfather was only a plain farmer, and I'm just an every-day money-maker. You'll be the first gentleman in the Titus family, boy. But he's coming up the steps. I suppose it'd look more natural if I was to go and open the door myself."

"I think that would be best."

The old man went into the hall, and following at a little distance, Job stood just behind his father as he flung open the door, and throwing out his hand, exclaimed, with splendidly-simulated cordiality:

"Well, well, brother Eph! But I *am* glad to see you."

"I can't say how delighted I am to see you, Jabez," the visitor replied. "You look just like father. This your boy? Didn't know you had a son; but then, of course, how could I?"

"Yes, this is Job," Jabez replied.

"How we do cling to the old biblical names, Jabez. But I don't know that there are any better. With all the material progress the world has made in the last few hundred years, I don't believe we have produced any greater, better men than the old Hebrew prophets or the Greek philosophers."

Ephraim was hanging up his hat in the hall, and Jabez shot a glance of intelligence, of triumph, at his son; this last speech seemed to bear out the assumed character of "old-fashioned bishop," which Jabez had attributed to his visitor.

"I am not very strong in that line, Eph," said Jabez, "but I suppose it's all in your business."

"What line, Jabez?" Ephraim inquired.

"Prophet line. I suppose that's what you're into—that and preaching."

"No, no!" Ephraim protested with a good-humored laugh. "I'm afraid I'm very worldly; but sometimes I think of these things. Sometimes, when I contemplate all the misery of mankind, I wish we had another Moses to lead us out of the wilderness."

"Um!" was the brother's non-committal comment, as he led the way into the parlor, after a suspicious glance at

the handbag and the suitcase that Ephraim had dropped in the hall, with all the nonchalance of a *bona-fide* brother returning to the ancestral home.

"I see you've made quite a few improvements in the old place, Jabez," Ephraim went on. "Among your other modern conveniences, I suppose you've put in a bath-room. I'd like a wash after my ride from New York. Where is it? Guess I can find my way. And have you a room for me? If I'm going to put you to any inconvenience, I can go to one of the new hotels; but, if not, I'd like to spend one night under the old roof."

"One night, brother?" Jabez replied, half turning from Ephraim to wink at Job, the announcement of a one-night stay being another confirmation of his suspicions. "You came all the way from Brazil to spend just one night with us?"

"No—hardly that. Business in New York brought me from Brazil and detained me longer than I had expected. I must take a boat for Rio de Janeiro on Friday; and it will be necessary for me to leave Rosburg to-morrow."

"That's too bad," Jabez replied, with admirable diplomacy. "Job'll show you your room."

As Job led the way, Uncle Ephraim asked:

"In college, Job?"

"Just graduated, from Cornell."

"What in?"

"Engineering."

"What are you going to do?"

"Going back to Ithaca as first-year instructor."

"How much a year?"

"A thousand."

"Don't you do it."

"Why?"

"I'll give you something better. Come to Brazil with me, and I'll start you at three thousand."

"That's a very kind offer—especially as you don't know anything about my abilities."

"If I wrote to Cornell asking them to send me a young engineer, what would I know about him? You're a graduate; you're my nephew, and I like your looks. What do you say?"

"I'll think about it, and let you know."

"You'll have to think quick. I shall want you to leave here with me to-morrow."

"I'll decide by noon."

"That'll do."

Rejoining his father in the parlor, Job said:

"I'm glad you didn't betray your suspicions; and I hope you wont. You're dead wrong, father. Uncle Ephraim has offered me a position in Brazil at three thousand a year."

"Of course, he would! Perfectly natural. But, wait, boy—just you wait. You'll see some fun before the night's over."

A few moments later, Uncle Ephraim joined them; and, Tomkins announcing dinner, they filed into the dining-room.

To Jabez Titus, dinner was the most important incident of the day; and, not even the hope of entrapping his self-invited guest into a damaging display of his ignorance of the Titus family history could distract the old man's attention from the tempting dishes or the excellent wines.

After one or two ineffectual attempts to draw Jabez into conversation, by inquiring about relatives and Rossburg citizens of a generation ago, Uncle Ephraim devoted himself to his nephew; and Job found his technical erudition taxed to acquit himself creditably in the searching "quiz" to which he was subjected upon engineering science.

But Uncle Ephraim seemed satisfied. As he rose, at the conclusion of dinner, he patted Job on the shoulder, saying: "You'll do, Job; you're all right."

In the library, Jabez sank into his favorite arm-chair beside the fireplace, and lighted a cigar, smiling to himself in anticipation of the fun he was going to have with his bogus brother.

But, while Jabez was clearing his throat to propound a seemingly simple question that he was sure would immediately "floor" the intruder, Job had asked his uncle a question which started him off into a long discourse upon the constitution and government of Brazil.

From that, of his own volition, he branched off into some interesting reminiscences of the last days of the Empire—into an account of the revolution,

in which he had commanded a regiment on the royalist side; and he mentioned, modestly enough, his meeting with the dethroned Emperor and Empress, on the eve of Dom Pedro's exile.

When Uncle Ephraim paused, momentarily, Jabez seized the opportunity to ask him if he remembered Billy Morse, who used to drive the stage from Hilton; but at the same moment Job let fall a word about the rosewood forests of Brazil; and, when Ephraim ignored his question to answer Job's, the father chuckled to himself, satisfied that Ephraim had found his question a "poser."

From a description of the rosewood forests, Ephraim trailed off into vivid word-pictures of the enormous valley of the Amazon, which, according to Humboldt's estimate, was adequate to the maintenance of a population of three hundred million.

From these, before Jabez had time to propound another artful interrogation, Ephraim shifted to the bituminous coal-fields in the valley of Candiota, mentioning, incidentally, that he owned mines covering an area of a hundred square miles.

"Twenty years ago," he said, "my chief interests were in the diamond mines, on the Serra de Espinhaço, near the northern borders of the province of Minas. I made money in them; but there's a good deal more in the 'black diamonds.'"

This led to a discourse upon the mining and marketing of other precious stones in Brazil—emeralds, sapphires, rubies, topaz, beryls, tourmalines and amethysts—which lasted until midnight.

As the clock struck, Uncle Ephraim rose, threw away his unfinished cigar, and said:

"I've had a delightful evening, Jabez, talking over old times and recalling old friends and neighbors; but I suppose you want to go to bed, and I know I do. Good-night, unless you're coming up with me."

"No; I'll finish my cigar. Job will turn the switch to light the upper hall, and you'll find your room, all right. Good-night."

Until he heard the bedroom door

close on his guest, Jabez said nothing more; but, soon as he was satisfied he would not be overheard, he exclaimed:

"Oh, but isn't he the cool, smooth, slick article! I never got a chance to cross-question him. He never stopped talking. Shows what a deep 'un he is. But, never mind, we'll give him a surprise—him and the rest of 'em."

"What are you going to do, father?"

"You and I are going upstairs in a few minutes, so he'll think we've gone to bed. We'll take off our shoes and steal down the back stairs, come here to the library, and sit in the dark until the bishop comes down to let the others in."

Knowing the uselessness of arguing with his father when once his mind was made up, Job rose, and, turning off the switch, followed the old man.

As they reached the upper hall, Jabez yawned portentously; and, opening his door, Uncle Ephraim beckoned to them. Half undressed, he was smoking a cigaret.

"I hope you don't mind cigarets," he said, with an apologetic smile, as Jabez and Job entered his room. "But in Brazil we smoke them almost exclusively; and I can't go to bed without one. I forgot to ask you, Jabez, how much money have you hoarded away in that strong-room of yours?"

"I never said anything about my strong-room," Jabez replied, with a sidelong glance at Job.

"Of course, you didn't; but it's famous everywhere. When I gave my address to the hotel clerk in New York he smiled. 'Care of Jabez Titus, Crow's Nest, Rossburg. Is he your brother?' he asked. Then, he told me about the strong-room you had built, in your distrust of banks. It's none of my business how much you may have in it; but it seemed to me that it must be quite an amount, if you thought it worth while going to the expense of such construction as was described to me."

"Well, supposing I might have about two hundred and twenty-thousand dollars in gold stored away in my strong-room, brother Ephraim; what then?" Jabez demanded, with a belligerent frown.

"Why, considering that you might be

drawing anywhere from three to six per cent interest, on the most conservative investment of your money, brother Jabez, I would say you are a fool."

"Maybe I am; and what then?"

"Just this: I don't care to go into fractions; but if you want to put the two hundred thousand in the First National Bank and give me a draft on it, I'll invest it for you in Brazil, and guarantee you twenty per cent."

"Well, now, that's real kind in you, Ephraim, and I'll think about it; I'll sleep on it, brother."

"All right. Good-night, Jabez."

"Good-night, Eph."

Five minutes later, Jabez met Job in the darkened library.

"Wasn't that the nerviest, rawest deal of all?" he asked. "Cross questioning me as to how much I had in the strong-room! And the way he carried it off—when I politely reminded him I'd never mentioned the strong-room—saying as he heard about it from the hotel clerk in New York!"

"I don't think there's any use you and I discussing Uncle Ephraim, father, because we each have positive ideas, diametrically opposed."

"All right; but you'll change your ideas inside of two hours. I won't say another word. Just take this gun—I have another for myself—and keep wide awake, until two o'clock."

Job took the revolver and sank down on the Turkish sofa. He was very tired and drowsy; but he fought valiantly against the inclination to sleep. Sitting there in the dark, listening to his father's stertorous breathing, its monotony broken only by occasional chuckles, or involuntary snorts due to the nodding of his heavy head, to Job the minutes seemed long as hours.

It looked an eternity before the eight-day clock struck one.

The sound had hardly died away before they heard a peculiar crunching sound on the gravel walk in front.

"Here they come, Job," said Jabez. "Don't get excited. They won't begin operations yet. They'll hide behind the shrubs and wait an hour or so."

The noise, however, came nearer; and a quick footstep sounded on the steps and the veranda. The stillness of

the night was broken by a ringing peal from the doorbell.

"I'll go," said Jabez. "You keep out of sight."

Turning the hall and veranda switches, Jabez opened the front door.

"Telegram for E. Titus. Thirty-five cents charges," a messenger-boy announced. "Sign here."

Having paid and signed, Jabez bade the boy "Good-night," locked the door and returned to the library, telegram in hand.

"Something I can't quite understand about this," he muttered, frowning. "Of course, the telegram may have been sent by one of the crooks right here in the city, to warn the old fellow not to do anything to-night—some of 'em sick, maybe, or pinched; or else it's just a blind to make us believe that he really is Ephraim."

"Or else the 'old fellow' is your brother and the telegram is on some important business," Job replied. "Let me take it up to his room."

"No; I'll take it myself. He'll wonder at my being dressed; and I'll have to explain. Guess I'll take off my coat and collar, and pretend I just came downstairs. You wait here."

Jabez had to knock several times on Ephraim's door before it was opened.

"Telegram for you, Eph," he said.

"A cable from my agent in Rio de Janeiro, forwarded from New York," were the next words Job heard. "I shall have to answer this. What time is it?"

"Ten minutes after one."

"I suppose the only thing for me to do is to dress and go down to the city. I wonder if Job would go for me. You have an automobile, haven't you?"

"No need to get Job out of bed or for you to go, either. I'll telephone and have them send up a messenger."

"Thank you, Jabez; that's the best way. I'll slip some clothes on and come downstairs."

"All right, Eph."

Jabez left Uncle Ephraim and returned to the library.

"You'd better sneak across the hall into the dining-room," he whispered to Job. "I told him you were in bed."

After concealing the clothes that he had just discarded, Jabez went to the

'phone and called for a messenger-boy.

A minute later, Uncle Ephraim came down and Jabez told him to sit at his desk.

Ephraim wrote three messages before he appeared satisfied. Then, tearing up the first two and throwing the pieces into the waste-paper basket under the desk, he leaned back, took a silver case out of his waistcoat pocket and lighted a cigaret.

"Don't let me keep you up, Jabez," he said. "I'll wait for the boy and lock the door after him."

"I'm not sleepy," Jabez answered. "You leave the message with me and go back to bed. I'm going to smoke a pipe and have a glass of wine to see if it will make me sleepy."

"Well, if that's the case, I think I'll take you at your word. Here's the thirty-five cents you paid for me, two dollars for the cable and fifty cents for the boy. Sorry to be so much trouble."

"That's all right," the old man replied, with an assumption of good humor.

"Job's a fine boy. I hope he'll decide to go back to Brazil with me."

"I guess maybe he will, Eph—when ever you're ready to go there," was the father's diplomatic reply.

"I sail Friday," said Ephraim.

"Well, well, that's pretty short notice for the lad."

"By the way, one of the things that brought me to Rossburg was an idea I've had for some time that I'd like to do something for the old place; I'd like to give the people a small park in the middle of the city."

"Very handsome of you, Eph."

"There's a lot of ramshackle three-story buildings on the 400 block in Tyler Street, running through to Adams. How much do you suppose one could buy the block for?"

"Tell you, exactly. It's six hundred feet long, and they hold it at a thousand dollars a foot."

"Six hundred thousand dollars, eh? It would cost another hundred and fifty thousand to tear the buildings down and make the park. That's not such an awful lot. Would you make the deal and superintend the work for me, Jabez?"

"Sure!" Jabez cheerfully assented.

"Well, I'll see the mayor to-morrow; and if the city is disposed to accept the park and keep it in good shape after it's made, I'll send you a draft from New York."

"Here's to you and the park, Eph," said Jabez, tipping his glass.

The doorbell rang; and, after giving the boy the cablegram and the money, Ephraim went to bed, just as the clock struck half-past one.

Stealing back from the dining-room, Job found his father piecing together the torn telegraph blanks. It was not a difficult puzzle, as they had been torn only in four pieces each. When the parts had been arranged satisfactorily, the two men stood looking down at them. On each, the address was the same:

"Pirie, 45 Alhambra, Rio de Janeiro;" but the messages were different, and both unintelligible. The first read:

"Tufnetbildibpablokdag;" and the second: "Pifnitfilsonmapdifornonlab."

"Read it—translate it!" Jabez exclaimed. "I suppose it's Latin or Spanish."

"I can't read it," Job protested.

"Can't read it! What's the use of your going to college if you can't translate a simple thing like that?"

"It isn't Latin nor Spanish," Job explained. "Either it's a cable company's code or Uncle Ephraim's private cipher."

"It's buncombe—that's what it is!" Jabez snapped. "It's all part of the plot. If that telegram that came had required an answer it would have been marked on the envelope and the boy would have waited. At first I thought it was from this man's pals to tell him it was all off for to-night, or else just a bluff to make us believe he really was Eph. But they're going to try it, all right. That's why he wanted to get you out of the house to take this bogus cable to the telegraph-office. If you had gone, they'd have knocked you on the head before you'd got six rods from the house."

The telephone-bell rang, and Job picked up the receiver.

"Well?" he asked; and his next question was, "Who is this?" After an in-

terval of listening, he answered: "Yes; I'll come right away. I'll be there in fifteen minutes."

Turning to his father, Job said:

"That was Dr. Parker, telephoning from Aunt Ruth's. She has had a relapse and is not expected to live until morning. The doctor says she is conscious just now and is very anxious to see me before she dies."

"And you're going?" Jabez demanded, as Job started to put on his shoes.

"Certainly. What else can I do?"

"Oh, you guileless boy!" was the father's somewhat contemptuous ejaculation. "Didn't I tell you a minute ago how Ephraim was trying to get you out of the house? The other crooks are waiting on the road; and when they saw the messenger-boy coming up to the house—they probably stopped him and asked him where he was going—they saw it was all off in that direction; so one of 'em telephones to say as your aunt Ruth is dying and wants to see you."

"Well, you know she is very low. I certainly am going. I suppose I may take the runabout?"

"Sure—take anything you like, and leave me here to be murdered."

It was eight o'clock before Job returned to Crows Nest. Doors and windows had been opened to admit the fresh morning air, and as Job ran his car into the yard, he saw that the servants were busy about their routine duties.

Going to the library, he found his father snoring peacefully on the sofa.

"Wake up, dad!" he said, shaking the old man gently.

Jabez started up and rubbed his eyes.

"What—morning?" he exclaimed. "And they never came. I must have fallen asleep."

"Guess you did, dad; and I'll bet your wildest dreams were not any more illogical than your waking thoughts of the last twenty-four hours."

"I never expected to see you again, boy. How was it they didn't knock you on the head?"

"Because there was no one looking for me with that amiable intention. Aunt Ruth died an hour ago."

"Dead! Poor Ruth. So, it was true, after all. But that doesn't prove anything. You see, this proposal of the old fellow upstairs to take you to Brazil was a reserve scheme to get you out of the way if other means failed. He's had the run of the house, learned the lay of the land; and if he can get you away, and sandbag or chloroform you, so you wont give any trouble for a few hours, he'll come back to-night with his pals and finish the job."

"Once you've made up your mind to a thing, father, there's no turning you. But I've decided to accept Uncle Ephraim's offer. I shall sail with him tomorrow for Brazil."

"All right; have your own way, boy; but when you come to, and make your escape, don't be afraid to come home again. I'll be glad to see you; and I wont rub it in too hard, Job."

At noon, Job left with Uncle Ephraim for New York; and about ten o'clock at night Jabez received a telegram from his son, notifying him of their safe arrival.

"Well, they made sure of him, all right—got him far enough away," Jabez mused. "That old crook is going to keep Job amused while the others do the job. Good thing I got some sleep to-day. I can sit up all night waiting for 'em."

But Thursday night passed and Friday night, without any assault being made upon the strong-room.

"They'll come to-night," Jabez mused. "They thought it best to wait a couple of days, so as to lull my suspicions. And, no doubt, they're waiting for the 'bishop' to come back from New York. Hope he don't hurt Job."

After his long night vigil, Jabez ate a light breakfast, and then went out on the veranda to read the morning paper. As he sat down, the postman came up the drive, and handed him a letter addressed in Job's writing.

As he slit open the envelope and unfolded the letter, an enclosure fluttered to the veranda floor. He read:

DEAR FATHER: We sail at five o'clock. Uncle Ephraim asks me to tell you that the Mayor of Rossburg accepted his offer of the park, and I am enclosing certified check for seven hundred and fifty thou-

sand dollars for that purpose. You lost your bet, and owe me five dollars. I wont rub it in, however—would like you to take the money and buy yourself a new pipe. The old one is pretty rank.

Uncle Ephraim introduced me to a lot of magnates to-day, and we had a bully time generally.

Sorry I couldn't stay for Aunt Ruth's funeral. Address me in care of Ephraim Titus, 45 Alhambra, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Your affectionate son,
JOB TITUS.

After picking up the check and satisfying himself of its genuineness, Jabez ran to the end of the veranda and called:

"Adkins!"

Adkins, formerly a London cab-driver, and now the Titus chauffeur, emerged from the garage.

"Yes, sir," he said, pulling his forelock.

"Come here, Adkins."

"Yes, sir."

"Sit down, Adkins. For the next five minutes before you take me to town I want you to sit there and swear at me."

"What about?" Adkins inquired, blankly.

"Because I'm a slant-head. I want you to enlarge on that, and put it into good Billingsgate."

"That's heasy, sir," Adkins replied, with a broad grin. He clasped his hands over his right knee, leaned back in his chair, looked Jabez full in the face and began.

"Watch in hand, old Titus listened; and for the first minute he grinned and chuckled, while the Englishman berated him in the most picturesque profanity it ever had been his privilege to hear.

But as Adkins went along, warming to his subject, his expletives and ob-jurgations becoming more intricate and sweeping, Jabez blanched and shivered.

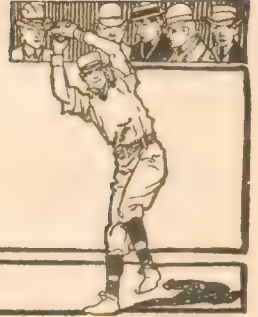
Finally, at the expiration of two minutes and thirty seconds, he closed his watch with a snap, jumped from his seat and clapping a hand over the chauffeur's mouth, said:

"Time's up, Adkins. Here's your ten dollars; and you earned it. You did beautifully. Now, get the car ready."



The Prize Boob

By BRUCE FARSON



WHEREIN WE MEET THE THREE MUSKETEERS OF BASEBALL

IF DUMAS had lived in the twentieth century, the three musketeers would have been named "Babe" Doll, "Curly" Wolf and "Shorty" Long; and they would have played baseball with the Leopards.

Babe, Curly and Shorty formed a triumvirate that was known from Beanville to Chicago. Their exploits were often narrated to awed groups of "bushers" in the lobbies of "tank town" hotels by the boys who had sojourned temporarily on the big circuit. Hadn't Curly hurdled the center field fence in Banditville and caught a near home-run as he plunged over? Hadn't Babe batted .340 in 1911 and led the league in stolen bases? Hadn't Shorty out-guessed half the players in the "majors" and won one championship by his wits? And more than all that, weren't the three collectively and individually, renowned as the most fantastic coaches, the most insidious umpire baiters, the most charming rascals withal, among the *élite* of the game?

What wonder then, that Gardner Wells, fresh from the campus and by nature, should hardly have stowed his belabeled suitcase in his berth upon the Leopard Training Trip Special, before he craved the boon of having them pointed out to him? Gardner's intentions were good and his curiosity no greater than that of his brother recruits; but his choice of informant was worse than bad, for he sought enlightenment from no other than Curly Wolf himself. Thus it was not surprising that

young Gardner Wells was chosen for the special attentions of the Inseparables.

Curly turned at the ex-collegian's question and regarded him gravely.

"Who? Them?" he replied. "Why, there's Long in the section with the two ladies; Wolf's sittin' over in berth twelve, an' Doll—" He let his eye roam leisurely over the crowded Pullman. "Doll, I guess he aint come yet. Leastways, I don't see him."

The "Long" that Curly pointed out was a lean and dyspeptic looking newspaper man. "Wolf" was another scribe, the direct antithesis of "Long" as to build and complexion. Curly drew the recruit into his section.

"Sit down here," he said affably. "My name's Parker, I write baseball for the *Times*. That's how I come to know all the boys. Let me get your name right now."

Gardner, the boy hope of old Eli, told Curly his name and past performances. He explained with youthful enthusiasm that he loved the game more for the sport of it than for the money.

"And I'm best in left field, where Wolf is playing now. I hadn't hoped to get a chance at it. I'd figured that maybe I'd work in somewheres else. Center field was weak last year; but now—" The recruit hesitated and Curly nodded gravely.

"I got yuh," he said. "Wolf's hog fat—been lushin' all winter. Why, kid, yuh can take that left field job away from him like a breeze! Believe me!

I've seen you work before—in the Hah-void game last year. You're the pick-me-up kid all right an' that's no josh! Just let me give yuh a tip, now. Don't let these old four-flushers bull yuh—an,' listen, get to bed early! Sleep means condition. Just paste that in your hat."

The left field candidate blushed at the bogus Mr. Parker's praise and promised to mucilage his precepts into his head-gear.

In pursuance of his fell purpose, Curly convoyed the recruit through dinner. Twice the fragile foundations of his house of lies tottered—once, when the real Parker slapped him on the back and cried:

"Ah! Curly, old top! How's the batting eye?" and again when "Spitter" Street, the pitcher, inquired solicitously as to how he wintered. However, Curly frowned them away and glared forbiddingly at all comers thereafter. He soothed the innocent curiosity of young Gardner by muttering:

"Bunk! Bunk! These ball tossers have got to have their joke. Like to make believe us writin' guys are players because we get into suits and practice with 'em to take off weight."

Curly's attentions were unflagging until he had tucked his foundling into an upper berth. Then, finger to mouth, he beckoned the Leopards into the smoking compartment. They gathered round him peevishly, for his conduct in the dining car had been more or less insane. Now his actions were more so. He doubled up in paroxysms of unholy mirth. He could only wave his arms gleefully and gasp for breath. Not till "Babe" Doll thumped him over the shoulders with a suit-case did he give voice.

"Oi yoi! I've got the prize boob! He's a guy named Gardner Wells and he's from Yale! Listen, you felluhs!"

Gardner Wells, in his swaying upper berth, heard subdued voices and merriment in the aisles and wondered sleepily what was the joke; but that he was not destined to find out for some time, since by breakfast next morning, every man, woman and child was in the hoax and sworn to secrecy.

The spring limbering-up process be-

gins tenderly. The first day in training camp sees every man out in uniform; but the most ardent recruit attempts nothing more than a little cautious throwing. To Gardner's unpracticed eye, every man on the field appeared wooden jointed and creaky. With elaborate carelessness, he watched the cadaverous "Long," the cherubic "Wolf" and the gigantic "Doll," but his sleuthing was in vain. Their motions differed not at all from those of the other players. Nevertheless the fire of hope blazed brightly in his breast and he put a little exuberant filip on the ball that he was tossing to the new third baseman from the Sacramento team.

"They'll never get in shape," he whispered to himself. "Especially Wolf! Why he looks like a prize piglet!"

On the third day of training, Fillmore, the Leopard manager, sent a recruit pitcher into the box and ordered batting practice. The mellow March sun warmed Gardner's shoulders as he lolled against his bat and waited for his turn at the plate. The long Long was just in front of him; the real Curly on his other side. When Long went to the batter's box, Curly nudged him.

"Clean to the bad!" he grieved. "I wouldn't be surprised if they sent him to the minors, an' Wolf's worse, they tell me!" He shook his head solemnly. "Too bad! I can see the old Leopards in the second division this year unless you an' some other youngsters can step into their shoes."

Wells gripped his bat tightly and watched Long poke a feeble fly into the pitcher's waiting mitt. Then he strode to the plate and poled a hit into right field.

"You don't have to kill the ball," growled Fillmore. "Just get your eye on it."

Curly dropped a "Texas leaguer" over second base and the two walked back together.

"You can hit 'em better than Long himself," said the ex-collegian.

"Oh, I used to play a little ball," deprecated Curly. "Mostly luck, that was."

The next afternoon, the recruits played the veterans. It took strenuous

arguments and compromising promises of good behavior on the part of the Inseparables to persuade Fillmore to stand in with their plans, but at length he succumbed. Thus it was that the youthful Gardner gloated over the bumbles of McCormick covering second, the nerve-racking contortions of Parker in left field, and the ponderous efforts of Inverness at first. In fact, he was too busy gloating to notice the hilarity of the rest of the squad. The recruits won, 14 to 3, and young Gardner wrote home to a certain girl that baseball was a great game.

For the benefit of the owner's bank-roll, the Leopards always traveled in two squads and so it was that the first game of the youngsters and veterans was the last for a time, since the next morning, Fillmore read the roster of the two teams and Gardner Wells was "junketing" with the Yannigans before noon. The junket consisted of a whirl through Texas and Oklahoma, with exhibition games in every town that would guarantee a likely percentage of the gate receipts.

By the time the Yannigans had covered their circuit, they were fast growing shy of fat and long of wind. As Gardner hardened up and grew callouses on his hands, the respect of his team-mates increased. He was what Fillmore called a "sweet hitter" and his judgment and speed on the bases was a delight to the eye. Moreover, his college manner was gradually sloughing away and the real clean youth of the boy stood more fully exposed. The clean youth of the other Yannigans, whether they were culled from sandlot, city street, or hay-field, measured him and found him qualified to a place in the niche of their friendship and respect.

Bailey, the team's regular third baseman, who sojourned with the Yannigans merely to balance the rawness of the recruit infield, sat on the bench in the second game of the Sunday double. header at Wichita and watched the ex-collegian spear a long fly after a well-timed backward sprint.

"Humph!" he grunted. "Somehow, that kid Wells minds me o' Mike, o'

the Giants. He eats 'em up for sure!"

He spat reflectively. "Dirty shame that job they're puttin' up on him. I've a mind to wise him up," he ruminated.

After the game, however, when he heard Wells naively commenting on the certainty of his landing the left field berth, Bailey held his peace. Yes, the boy was certainly fresh.

The Yannigans were due in Leopardville the day before the season opened; but a burned trestle a hundred-odd miles from home kept them out of town till the morning of the eventful day. The veterans were already taking "warming up" practice when they reached the grounds. Occasional "fans" dotted the huge stands like caraway seeds in rye-bread.

As Gardner Wells trotted upon the field, he looked for Wolf, Long and Doll with ardent interest as to their condition; but he saw them not. Instead, his surprised gaze encountered the figure of his friend Parker of the *Times*, togged out in the playing uniform of the Leopards. The reporter spied him also and strode forward. He loomed tall and bronzed and hard as nails in his natty white suit.

"Hullo, Wells!" he cried and gripped the youngster's hand. "Feelin' fit?"

"Immense!" said Gardner. "But what are you doing out here in a suit and where's Wolf?"

The counterfeited Parker shook his head dubiously.

"Why! Didn't yuh hear? About yesterday? I thought everybody knew that!"

"No. What?"

"Down and out! Wolf's released an' Long an' Doll traded to Boston. Listen. It was like this. They couldn't get into shape, see? And then Fillmore got sore, so yesterday what does he do but tie a can to 'em." He shook his head again. "The old team wont seem the same without 'em; but young blood—" He paused.

Gardner's face was flushed and his eyes sparkled.

"That means that I'll—" he stammered.

The other nodded.

"Looks like you in left field for a

fact. Well, I must be beatin' it. See you later, kid."

Young Gardner Wells' hard muscles felt to him like coiled springs. He thrilled with triumph and anticipation.

When his turn came at bat, he swung against the ball with a full-arm sweep that sent the out-fielders scampering back toward the fence. Then he charged down to first base like a runaway locomotive. Fillmore, in the coacher's box, saw and considered.

Gradually, Leopardville came out to the game. The stands began to ripple with long rows of faces. Brilliant spots of color in the boxes marked the patronage of the fairer sex. An "Umpah" brass band labored valiantly with "Conquering Hero Comes" and "Hail! Hail! The gang's all here!" To the players clustered around the home bench, the music was hardly more than the bleat of a cornet. The ceaseless shuffle of feet and the roar of jolly voices drowned all else.

Wells, a little awed by the immensity of the thing and a little worried over the responsibility that he was about to assume, crouched on the grass and tinkered with his glove. Momentarily, he expected Fillmore to tell him that he would start the game in left field. While he waited, he watched the gray clad Pigeons go through their fielding practice.

At last, a gong rang and Fillmore rose.

"All out, boys!" he snapped. Abruptly, he turned to Gardner. "An' you, Wells—go out an' catch a few flies back o' Wolf in left!"

At the name of Wolf, an icy hand seemed to close around Gardner's heart. He stared dumbly around till his eyes centered on the face of the grinning Parker. He heard a hoarse roar of laughter all about him. For a moment, he was puzzled; then the whole monumental, absurd hoax came to him and the chagrin of his position struck him like a blow. He felt the color mounting into the roots of his hair. His fists clenched angrily. Then he set his teeth and ground down his temper. "I can wait!" he told himself.

Mechanically, he took his position in left field and caught and threw as oc-

casione offered. He did not look at Wolf; nor later, when the starting gong rang and he came in to the bench, did he vouchsafe a glance at any of the other substitutes. The low hum of conversation and the continuous chorus of laughter told him well enough that he was still the all-absorbing object of interest to them all.

Instead of diminishing, his anger increased as the game progressed. He had pictured himself exuberantly cavorting around left field. Now he sat with his head in his hands and stared straight in front of him. Once, Wilson, candidate for short stop, edged close and said:

"Aw, don't get peeved!" but the scowl he got for an answer nipped his conciliatory efforts in the bud. After that the recruit was left severely alone.

The game had started as a walk-away for the Leopards; but as the innings passed, it tightened up. The Pigeons garnered a run in the sixth and another in the seventh; then in the eighth they fell upon Bucknell, the Leopard pitcher, and bombarded him out of the game. When the smoke cleared away, they led, 5 to 3, and the angry Leopards passed scoreless through their half of the inning.

The ninth opened squally. The first Pigeon batter gained first base on an error by Bailey. The next man up bunted him safely on to second and the third batter slipped a single through the infield. The Pigeons looked formidable again, with men on first and third and only one out.

For a moment, the crafty Fillmore hesitated. Then he signaled the infield to play close in. The four fielders worked forward to the edge of the grassy diamond and crouched watchfully, ready to spring at the crack of the bat. The Pigeon coaches poured forth a jumbled stream of "joshing," interlarded here and there with hidden key-words to the runners. Rockwell, now on the slab for the Leopards, took his time about pitching. He toyed with the ball and gazed balefully at the batter. Then abruptly, he snapped the sphere to the catcher for a stolen strike. The crowd roared approval of Rockwell's clever trick. The Pigeon batter

glowered and pounded the plate with his war club. Behind him, Carter, the catcher, muttered stinging gibes anent "bone-heads" and "ivory-tops." Then Rockwell speeded up a fast-breaking curve. It was his favorite offering and hard to hit. This time, however, the Pigeon hope was on his guard. He stepped warily forward and chopped savagely with his bat. There resounded the sharp crack of contact. A flash of white rocketed across the diamond. The Pigeon on third base tore frantically home. Then a gasp burst from the swaying stands, for Babe Doll, playing well off first base, bounced skyward, stretched up a calloused bare hand, and gripped the flying ball. The impact knocked him flat and the crowd held its breath, but Babe's reputation as a star was not exaggerated and now he proved it by scrambling to his feet and sprinting to first while the Pigeon base runner was trying to get back from second. The fans screamed their delight and the Leopards trotted jubilantly in.

Babe's spectacular double play seemed to have set the Leopards on their toes. Even the much abused Gardner Wells felt the thrill of excitement. Fillmore was snapping his fingers.

"Now, boys! Now!" he urged. "Let's pull this game out o' the fire! Open 'er up with a hit, Seymour!"

Seymour discarded an extra bat and nodded. He strode confidently to the plate. Savagely he swung at the first ball pitched and drove it into the outskirts for two bases. Long came next and delivered a perfect bunt that upset the whole Pigeon infield. He sprinted safely over first base and Seymour beat the throw to third. Becker, batting third, put a temporary quietus on the rally by boosting a lofty foul to the catcher for the first out. Doll, the popular idol, batted after Becker and went the way of most temporarily enthroned gods. He slashed a grounder to the second baseman that mowed down Seymour at the plate. Babe partially redeemed himself, however, by pilfering a second base on the throw in.

Fillmore was gnawing his finger nails. Two men out and a two base hit would tie the score; but Ingalls was to bat and Ingalls was not hitting at all. Desper-

ately he ran his eye over the squad of recruits and utility men on the bench. His gaze paused at Gardner Wells. The youngster crouched with elbows on knees. His face was tense and set. Suddenly, the Leopard manager had a "hunch" and acted on it.

"Wells!" he snapped. "You bat for Ingalls. Lively!"

The command trickled thinly to Gardner through the mist of anger and shame that filled his brain. He whirled to face the manager.

"M—Me?" he stammered.

"There aint any other Wells on the team, is there?" retorted Fillmore.

Gardner rose and picked his favorite bat from the row in front of the bench. Then, whipping it tentatively through the air, he walked toward the plate. The Pigeon pitcher was grinning at him.

"Who's the boy phenom?" asked the catcher sarcastically. Wells gave his name to the umpire and stepped into the batter's box. The pitcher, still grinning, framed a barely audible "Easy pickins, Bill," for Gardner's benefit.

However, the ex-Yale left fielder barely noticed it. His wrought-up feelings were enough to make the Pigeon battery's attempt at "goat getting" unavailing. He merely crowded close to the plate and swung his bat suggestively. The Pigeon slab artist wound up and let go a wide out-curve. Gardner lowered his bat and watched it go by.

"B—a—a—l—l!" chirped the umpire.

Gardner was in the throes of a boundless indignation against professional ball players in general. He drew no lines of distinction between Pigeons and Leopards. He hated them all. All thought of the game had trickled out of his mind. He had forgotten the straining spectators. The shrill yelps of the coaches rebounded unheard from his ear drums. He only realized that a duel was now in progress between himself and the man who stood in the middle of the diamond. His rage had passed the excitable stage. It was of the cool, calculating variety that knows not defeat. Like a cat, he poised while the Pigeon went through the contortions of pitching again. The ball came true and

fast; but Gardner let it pass as too low. He was waiting for just a certain kind of ball; then—

"Str—i—i—k—e!"

"He'll throw the next one wide and try to make me bite!" Gardner told himself. The pitcher did.

"B—a—a—l—l t—u—h!"

For the first time, Wells heard the voice of Curly Wolf coaching back of third base.

"Kill it, old kid! Knock it a block!"

The Pigeon slab man nodded in response to a signal from his catcher. Leisurely, he swung his arms above his head. Then, suddenly, he untwisted them and let drive. The ball had traveled barely ten feet before Gardner recognized it as the one he had been waiting for. He drew back his bat, then drove it forward with every ounce of muscle he possessed behind the swing. Triumphantly he felt his bat meet the horse-hide and drive it back. As he sprang away, he glimpsed a gray clad center fielder running frantically back toward the fence. Then he devoted himself to sprinting.

He cut first base accurately and straightened away for second. As he turned it, he saw Doll racing in to the home plate. His lungs were beginning to pump hard and his legs felt weighty; but he kept on. Back of third, he saw Wolf suddenly throw up both arms in the "hold this base" signal. He stole a glance over his shoulder and saw the Pigeon center fielder just stooping to pick up the ball. The short stop was ranging out to relay the throw to the plate.

"I can make it!" he told himself. Without slowing, he tore into the third base bag. He swung around it and straightened away for the plate. Then suddenly a brawny arm circled his waist.

"Hold it! Hold third!" a voice roared in his ear.

Gardner twisted like an eel. He felt his elbow smite a yielding stomach and heard a grunt of pain. The arm about him relaxed; he staggered a step or two, then caught his stride and raced on. He glimpsed the Pigeon catcher squatting at the plate, arms outstretched, mask and cap discarded. He heard a deep,

never ceasing roar of shouting. Then he "hit the dirt." Gardner had learned the art of sliding from a past master and now his training showed. Out of the tail of his eye, the Pigeon catcher saw it coming; but he did not flinch. He stretched a last inch to reach the oncoming ball, gripped it, and swung round. Then an irresistible something whipped his legs from under him and he pitched headlong, tagging vainly at the empty air.

"S—a—a—f—e!" snarled the umpire through a cloud of dust.

It was Fillmore himself who helped Gardner to his feet. Babe Doll closed in on the other side.

"Great work, kid!" he babbled. "Grand judgment!"

He slapped the youngster on the back and doffed his dusty cap to the shrieking maniacs in the grandstands. But Gardner Wells said nothing.

In the clubhouse he was equally uncommunicative. Silently he stripped and took his turn under the shower. Not till he was half dressed did he unburden himself and then it was only to one man—to wit, Curly Wolf.

"I'd like to see you after you're dressed," he said casually. "And your friends Mr. Doll and Mr. Long."

"Sure thing, kid!" agreed Curly affably.

The Inseparables were dressed before the recruit. They awaited him outside the dressing-room and greeted his approach with shamefaced grins. The face of young Wells, however, was lighted by no answering smile. He came very close to them before he spoke and then addressed his remarks exclusively to Mr. Wolf. His voice was very quiet, but firm.

"You're first, Mr. Wolf," he remarked and slapped Curly savagely across the face.

No matter what their faults, the Inseparables were far from yellow, and without argument, Curly shed his coat.

"All right, if you feel that way," he replied. "But you're a nice young kid an' I hate to do it."

Perhaps that was why Mr. Wolf did not "do it." Perhaps his failure was due to other causes. Suffice it to say, that his exposition of the manly art of self-

defence was heart-rending. He rushed in like a bull, flailed away once, twice, then curled up in a heap against the side of the clubhouse.

Young Gardner Wells blew on his bleeding knuckles and smiled affably upon Messrs. Doll and Long.

"Which one of you's next?" he asked; then, as neither thrust himself forward, he nodded at Babe.

"You got pretty familiar after I scored," he said. "Put up your hands."

Doll thoughtfully removed his coat. He looked at the faintly stirring carcass of Curly.

"Now if there's anything I can do to square this thing—" he began; but Garnder cut him short.

"Nothing doing!"

Babe sighed.

"Oh, very well," he said resignedly and assumed the Jeffries crouch.

But why go into details? Doll got in one punch and Wells spit out a tooth and smiled. Then a pile-driver fell upon Mr. Doll's face and drove him into Dreamland.

The youngster gave Shorty Long respite while he assisted the shaken Curly to his feet. Then he returned to the business of the day.

"Your turn now," he assured Shorty; but Shorty only smiled.

"I wont take off my coat," he said. "What's the use? Your time is probably valuable and I can't fight. Hit me in as painless a spot as possible."

For a moment, Wells debated the question; then he began to roll down his cuffs. Doll had risen and stood with Wolf and Long regarding the victor. Wolf broke the silence.

"Don't tell me if you don't want to; but did yuh see what hit me? Where, might I ask, did you learn to fight?"

Gardner Wells smiled.

"When I confided to you the history of my life, Mr. Parker—er Mr. Wolf—I forgot to mention that I was middle weight champion of the University. I assumed that as a newspaper reporter you would know that."

The three nodded gravely and again silence reigned. Wells brushed off his coat and slipped it on.

"Is there anything else, gentlemen?" he asked suavely.

Babe Doll grinned and stepped forward. Boldly, he shouldered the young man toward the gate.

"Only this," he said. "I want you to come over to Pete's place and let me buy you the tallest one we can get for a nickel."

"Delighted!" said young Gardner Wells.

Along the North Trail

By JOHN S. LOPEZ

IN ADVANCE of the sled labored two fur-clad men on snowshoes. Their heads were down, their bodies tilted forward to balance against the cut of the icy wind. For hours they had plodded on without exchanging a word. The wrath of the Wild was leveled against them. They spared their breath for the physical exertion that

defiance of Nature's laws entailed upon them.

So no human sound reached back to the others who toiled along in the rear—only the groaning of the sled—save when one of the trail-breakers turned at intervals to shout and flourish his club at the wolfish malamoots when they snarled or snapped at each

other unwontedly. At such times the scowl that was on his face seemed to reach back and include the figures that traveled behind. They were making fair time only because a double string of dogs tugged at the traces. The sled cut to a depth that would have defied an ordinary team. Its burden of boxes and packages and heaped-up camp impedimenta was out of all proportion to its intended capacity.

The figures that followed the sled were clad in furs that swathed them to the head and might have been replicas of the others, except that one was very tall and one was small and boyish in stature. Yet there was a more definite difference between them and the men in front. And this was not wholly physical; they faced their task less assuredly and seemed not entirely confident on snowshoes. It was impossible to distinguish the faces of any of the party. Lips, and cheeks, and brows were covered with a frost from their breath, which masked them with uncanny effectiveness. They might have been sprinkled with the mica dust that one powders over Christmas trees.

And yet there was a difference. It might have been in the more companionable attitude of the two. Unlike the leaders, they trudged along, side by side; and occasionally, when the boyish one faltered or met difficulty on the rough places in the trail, the other paused or lent an assisting hand until they could again proceed side by side. Only at such times was there speech between them, and then the sum total was a word of cheer from the man. It was not experience that held them mute as it did the others. It was the silent clutch of the North-wild come to its season of supremacy. It oppressed them—it bore down on their minds and froze thought and utterance of thought as it had frozen the land. It had shown them the puny weakness of man in the face of Nature's forces. They were the sport of the Wild. Their brains were numbed to the one focus—to go on and on, passively, until they reached shelter from this mocking Nature.

The forest frowned upon them ominously—wrathful that it could oppose

no effectual barrier to these humans who defied the Wild's law of lifelessness in the winter season. And yet the cruelty of the Wild to its own had defeated its intent. The trees did not shelter companionably as in the forests of benign lands. Sapless and frozen to the heart, they were leaning toward each other as though for protection against the cold and these adventurers. There was ample room between them for a devious route to the frozen river-course, where the wayfarers would find a clear way.

Yet there was other life abroad in the land, and knowledge of it had goaded the party to its unusual exertions. They had seen or heard no sign of it for hours; but they knew it was there. It had dogged them relentlessly for three days now, and they had given over hope of shaking it off. They knew what to expect and when. The short, sunless day was just hinting at an end when the two in the rear stopped suddenly. A distant, wavering cry had reached their ears, too faint, apparently, for the others to notice, in their preoccupation. They were crossing a natural clearing and would soon be in the forest again.

"Look back!" said the boyish one, and the strained voice betrayed her. It was the voice of a woman, well modulated, musical even in its anxiety. She clutched at the arm of the man. He nodded; there was no need to look. Their voices and the whimpering of the dogs had attracted the men on the lead. They stopped and halted the team questioningly, though their manner showed there was no need of question.

Then came the second cry, faint at first, but wailing upward till it reached a wavering note that palpitated with uncanny eagerness. The sound was in the rear, back in the forest they had left a half hour before. Then from the right, and from the left, and even before them, arose answering howls.

"They're early to-day," said the girl. Her voice was tense. One of the men in front turned with a chuckle of bravado that did not in the least disguise his uneasiness. He was short and rotund, and naturally jovial of face.

"It'll be earlier to-morrow," said he.

"Earlier when they come and later when they leave. Daylight aint goin' to hold 'em back forever. They're hungry—probably aint eat for days. There aint nothing living in the land for 'em to eat!"

"Right you are, Pierre," said his companion, pointedly, "—nothing living but *us*. And they're beginning to know we aint givin' 'em a fight. Just creeping on and bluffin'. That's why they're getting bolder. By and by they aint going to bluff no more, an' then what?"

No one answered. The girl shuddered and they heard the sharp, sudden intake of her breath. Her companion's eyes hovered on her face sympathetically. He rested his hand on her shoulder as though to reassure her.

"I don't need to tell you *what*," continued the guide, wrathfully. "An' it's all on account of one damn fool that drives a sled down a crevice an' loses our guns an' ammunition. I knew when he was took along against my judgment that somethin' would happen!" He glanced hatefully at the tall young man.

The girl drew toward the one he glared upon; and the sudden poise of the latter's body and the flash of his deep-set brown eyes were eloquent of gathering wrath.

"Dry up!" interrupted Pierre. "Talk aint going to help none. An' it wasn't altogether the young doctor's fault. Right is right, Jacques. When we crawled into Dawson for help you didn't see any other doctors volunteerin' to come back with us, did you? You might tell 'em the post was blowed up and people hurt and they wouldn't move this weather. What's only three dying men to their comfort, even if one is the factor, an' Louison's father, here. An' this chap didn't need no coaxing, though you made it clear he wasn't wanted and that you wouldn't take him if any other doctor would go."

The other guide glared upon him. "No," he snapped, "I didn't want him, and I wouldn't have took him only for Louison's coaxin'. An' I shouldn't have listened to her coming, either. This aint a trip for wimmen an' dudes, an'

you'll all know it before we get through—if we ever do get through."

The girl wheeled sharply toward him. "Jacques," she said in a hurt manner, "what Pierre said is true. You are very unfair. Think of my father lying at the post, dying maybe, and I haven't seen him for so long. You used to be good to me before I went away. You've forgotten me, I'm afraid."

"No, I aint, either," retorted the guide, his voice softening to a sullen grumble. "I aint changed an' you know it. But I aint forgot my boy Dick that's been waiting for you five years, though it appears you have! I can see the way you've been goin' on with this—" He did not finish the sentence, but again swept his eyes contemptuously over the tall young man.

The latter gently forced his way past the young girl. With an impatient sweep of his mittened hand he cleared the frost-rime from his face. The poise of his body, the clutch of his feet to the ground, betrayed anger that could be restrained no longer. But before he could speak the words crowding to his lips, Pierre, the rotund, interfered:

"Fine time to fight, aint it?" he vociferated. "Scrappin' while wolves draw around us every minute. We aint got guns an' the next best thing is fire. An' how are we goin' to get fire if we stand out here fussin' till the beasts cut us off from the forest? I, for one, aint hankerin' to be eat alive. Besides," he continued wrathfully, "things are bad enough without tryin' to scare Louison." A sudden howl close at hand interrupted him. "Hear that?" he said. "You ought to be ashamed—both of you—that's what!"

The tall man halted abruptly, the passion fading from his face. "Yes, yes," said he, "we ought to be ashamed!" He drew back toward the girl with a protecting gesture. But his eyes avoided hers and a certain buoyancy seemed gone from his carriage. She looked at him eagerly, searchingly, and then, finding no response, averted her face. Silently, they fell into place behind the sled.

With a muttered oath half under his breath, Jacques Leroque stamped impatiently to the front. A shout of com-

mand and the dogs were off with a sudden bound. The guides ran to the sides, leading them toward a narrow arm of the forest that jutted forth into the snow-bound clearing like the beckoning finger of an oasis. No need to urge the dogs. They had been straining frantically at the traces, their exhaustion forgotten, their little quarrels sunk in the greater fear that obsessed them. Scarcely more than wolves themselves, but a generation or two removed from this kin of the wilds that stalked them, the dogs were strong with the instinct of the Wild and knowledge of the relentless laws of the Wild. And so, with fear as the goad, the sled team leaped ahead at such a pace that the man and the girl behind were hard put to keep up.

A curious little party this, that was pitting its human frailty against the scorn of the Wild in its forbidden season, but not more curious than the events that had thrown them together. There were the two guides, Pierre Meudon and Jacques Leroque; there was Louison Dariole, daughter of the factor of the fur post in the Yukon wilderness; and then there was young Doctor Robert Brant, a product of the East, and of the culture of the East. He had been practicing medicine in Dawson only because it furthered his project. This was the quest of gold! Not as other men in Alaska sought it, with pick and shovel, nor yet because he needed it. His was a scientific quest, the proving of a theory for extracting the precious metal direct from pay dirt or ore with a combination of cyanides. And thus he had met Louison. She, homeward bound after five years in the States, where she had been educated, had reached Dawson late in the fall to learn that further progress was impossible until winter lifted its embargo from the land. They had become friends, good comrades—so Brant assured himself. Then in mid-winter had come the guides for medical aid and supplies. There had been an explosion at the post, killing and maiming several, among them Louison's father. She had insisted on going back with the guides, and because of this the doctor had volunteered in the

face of opposition that was only overcome by Louison's persistence.

As the sled moved forward, the followers were beset with increasing difficulty. The wind had drifted the snow in crazy heaps and gullies that entailed careful, painful management of the snowshoes. From every side the weird wolf-cry of hunger wailed up. Now palpitating, uncanny, eager with food-lust; now faint, now gaining in volume, reverberating from the forest behind to the fringe of the forest ahead, sending down on the winds a message of merciless death. And yet Brant labored on, unseeing, unhearing, with set jaws and eyes wide open, looking straight ahead but seeing nothing. Indefinite as had been the words of Leroque, they had smitten him a blow—a blow that numbed him to the dangers that menaced. The words had shown him, with a sudden, glorious flash, that he loved this girl—had struck home at the same moment the knowledge that there was some barrier between them.

A month ago he had not known Louison—a week ago he would have scoffed at the idea of loving her. Their worlds were different; their lives must, of necessity, diverge sharply. And now, suddenly, he knew that he had loved her from the first—knew too, that she cared for him. He could not have explained how he knew this—there had been no action on her part to show it; and yet the certainty that it was so, stood out in his mind with unalterable positiveness.

Presently Brant aroused himself from his reverie. He turned toward the girl, looking down full into her deep, blue eyes.

"Is it true, Louison?" he asked.

She knew what he meant. "Yes, it is true," she replied, after a slight pause. Her voice wavered jerkily—whether from emotion or the difficulty of their progress he could not determine. She drew her eyes away. For a moment he watched her. Then he spoke again.

"Louison, I love you," he said simply. "But I did not realize it until Leroque spoke. You know I love you!"

She did not answer immediately and he gave himself to thought. A few more paces and her voice again aroused him.

She spoke in a low, thick tone, and yet distinctly. Her lips were quivering.

"Yes," she said. "I know. I am the one to blame. It was only when he spoke that I knew. But it is not too late—it is only beginning. It will pass."

He contradicted her with surprising calmness. "It will not pass," said he. "You know it will not pass, Louison. And why should it pass? Surely, this thing that stands between us can be overcome. That is, if you care!"

"Care!" she cried, with a sudden inflection that swept her voice upward. "Care!" she repeated slowly, and her voice dropped down to a dull monotone. Taken off guard, she had sought to recover herself. He noticed it and it cheered him vaguely. Her manner took on a certain air of determination as though she were about to justify herself.

"Whether I care or not would make little difference," she continued. "But I owe it to you to explain. This Dick, Leroque spoke of, is his son. We were children together. His father and mine were friends. And so they betrothed us before we knew what such things mean. I never really knew. Dick was only my brother—my good playmate. Then I was sent to the States, where the choice of her man lies with the girl. I was away long enough to forget all about it—long enough to forget all about Dick, save as a brother. Whenever I gave the matter a thought, it was that he too would look upon the betrothal as childish play."

"Perhaps he does," said Brant, eagerly.

Louison shook her head. "No," she replied softly. "You heard what his father said. It is a custom of our people—a sacred thing. I, alone, have been out in the world to learn the different way. It was cruel to let me learn."

"But you do not love him! You cannot marry him! It would be unfair to you—unfair to me—more unfair to him!"

"You do not understand," she interrupted sadly. "You are not of my people; how could you understand? With us it is a matter of honor, of the parent's honor. My father's word is in my keeping—and my own word, too,

though I was but a child. And perhaps even now he is dead at the post. For myself I would not care—for him it is different. I have no voice in the matter!"

"We will see—" began the man; but she interrupted him with a cautioning tug at the arm.

"Be careful," she said pleadingly. "Jacques Leroque is watching us. He is a violent man. It will make it hard for me. For my sake you will be careful?"

The sled had come to a stop and he had no time to reply. Instead, he walked forward and stood watching the guides moodily. They had reached the forest edge none too soon. Even now, dark specks were making their way across the clearing. Expectant howls met answering howls, some ominously close at hand. Over the tops of distant hummocks of drifted snow, gaunt, dog-like forms were hovering, now silhouetted for a moment against the leaden sky, then diving from sight in the gullies, to reappear at another spot.

Leroque was unlashing the cover of the sled. "Where's the axes?" he grumbled. "Seems nothing is right!" Various boxes and packages impeded his movements. He tossed them aside irritably. "It's our luck that this was the sled saved. Plenty of medicines an' such, but little grub, an' nothin' to fight with!"

"We'll need the medicines, all right, when we get to the post," suggested Pierre, pacifically.

"Yes, if we get there," snapped Leroque. He turned to the dogs which were stamping about with uneasy whimpering. "Shut up!" he shouted, wrathfully. Then his eyes fell on Doctor Brant. It was an opportunity to vent his spleen. "Here, you," he shouted insultingly, as he tossed out an axe, "get busy. If you did more work an' less interferin' things might be different."

The young man took the axe without a word; then, with Pierre, he fell to chopping up the tree branches that littered the ground. In a few minutes there was enough fuel to start the fire, but they continued chopping so there would be enough to last the night.

And as they worked, Leroque stacked up branches against the sled to make a windbreak. It was men's work that night, but Louison gave what assistance she could. Soon she had coffee cooking among the embers, and began to make preparations for pancakes.

When Leroque sought food for the dogs he burst into profanity. In the bag were scarcely enough fish to go around. "To-morrow," he said grimly, "the dogs will give out. Then what?" He thawed the fish and fed them to the dogs. Usually they would have bickered over each other's portion, but to-night they ate quietly, almost thoughtfully, munching awhile, then pausing to send anxious glances out over the snow. And when they had finished they would not leave the fire, though usually they were glad to go off and bury themselves in the snow, keen for rest after the rigors of a day in harness. Leroque would have driven them off. They were in his way. Within the glare of the big fire there was no sign of wolves. Only now and then came distant whines and a soft, shuffling sound as of animals scurrying about.

"Let the dogs be!" called Pierre, pausing from his work. "They know better than you do, I guess. Give 'em a chance, anyhow!"

Louison was stooping to pet the sled animals, and though usually they would have returned a snap for a caress, to-night they seemed eager for human sympathy. They crowded about her, shouldering each other. Pedro, the big, wolfish lead-dog was particularly tractable. It drew the attention of Leroque.

"All right," he acquiesced, "let 'em stay. When malamoots get polite, an' Pedro goes on like a scared rabbit, there's some reason."

Supper was eaten in silence, the fire heaped up, and then the party disposed itself about the camp. Louison rested against the windbreak where the glare of the fire played full on her face. Just opposite was Brant, sprawled out on a blanket. They did not talk. Across the fire lay Pierre and Leroque, smoking. Scattered about them were the dogs, wakeful, hair bristling, lifting their snouts and sniffing constantly.

The unrest of the dogs increased apace. At last it aroused the doctor from his pre-occupation. He had been watching Louison. Now he turned and swept his eyes around the horizon. He could scarcely check his nervous start. Out on the white blanket of snow where there had been nothing, was now a line of gaunt, dog-like creatures, scattered about in a circular fringe that completely encompassed the camp. Their eyes took up the glow of the fire and cast it back. To each dim form were two dull green orbs that never wavered in their fixity on the party. From time to time the wolves wailed softly, even pathetically. They gave the idea of supreme patience waiting for something inevitable. Only one of the wolves moved about. It was a great, lean creature, frowsy, battle-scarred, undoubtedly the leader of the pack. He was patrolling just as a human guard would do, brazenly, with no thought of concealment. Often he advanced within the outer rim of the light and regarded the party earnestly. It was a nerve racking proceeding to watch. Finally it roused Leroque.

"Curse it!" he shouted, when the beast came closer than usual. He sprang to his feet, waved his arms, and assailed it with a torrent of invective. A chorus of uneasy yelps from the dead-line was his answer.

"See?" he hissed. "They're gettin' used to fire. God! I'd give five years of my life for a rifle and enough cartridges." He swept the fringe with his eyes. "Just thirty-six of 'em. I could lay back an' pick 'em off in no time. But first I'd get that leader, curse him!"

"You got your revolver," suggested Pierre.

Leroque sneered. "Yes an' only one cartridge in it. I'm savin' that. You know what for," he added grimly.

Toward midnight, Brant awoke from an uneasy slumber to discover that Leroque, who was on guard, had taken a bottle of brandy from the sled and had it to his lips. His first impulse was to interfere, but he held himself in check. However, after that he only pretended to sleep, fearful that the fires would be neglected. Again and

again Leroque plied himself with the liquor. But it did not make him drunk or drowsy; it seemed only to arouse unreasoning fury in him. He was growling audibly, talking to himself, and the tenor of his wrath seemed to concentrate upon the big wolf that stalked around so impudently. Once he drew his revolver and aimed it; then he returned it to his belt. When dawn came, he was shouting aloud and frankly railing at the beast as if it were human and could understand.

Fury at this particular animal seemed to have become an obsession with him. And it seemed that fate conspired to prod him on this weakness. When the other wolves drew off with daylight and disappeared from sight, this gaunt gray leader stayed behind. All day long he stalked them just within a stone's throw, patiently, relentlessly, now behind, now in front, circling around.

About noon Leroque's fury burst its bounds.

"Curse that wolf!" he shouted with a sudden access of rage. His nerves had given way. "I'll get *him* anyhow!" He seized an axe, then bent down and loosened Pedro, the big lead dog. "Get him, Pedro," he yelled. Before Pierre could restrain him, he was running after the dog out on the snow.

They watched him anxiously, though there seemed to be no danger. There were no other wolves in sight; for hours there had been no sign of wolves. They saw the gaunt beast bound away and disappear down a gully with the sled dog and Leroque in pursuit. Then there came an awful, clamorous howl. Back into sight ran the dog with two wolves at his flanks. They had hidden in the hollow. The dog turned and sprang at the throat of the big gray wolf. They met in midair and crashed to the ground. With that, it seemed as if a torrent of lean gray forms poured over the edge and piled upon the struggling animals. It was all lightning quick—scarcely time between for thought. And the chorus of howls on the top had been swelled by another chorus from the gully, a ravenous hell-chorus that struck terror to the listeners. A few

moments—then silence in the gully and silence on the top! And when the wolves about the dog had untangled themselves and loped off with mournful howls, there was nothing to be seen of Pedro save a pawed up spot where the snow had been reddened.

Louison had fallen against Brant's shoulder, and in caring for her he had no time to give way to his own horror. Pierre had broken down completely. His face was twitching, his hands shaking as if with ague. Over and over he kept babbling inanely:

"They got him alone—they got him alone—they got him alone!"

"I heard no shot," said Brant for want of something to say.

"There wasn't time—he didn't have time," mumbled Pierre. "God! oh, God! I wish I had that cartridge Leroque didn't have time to use."

They camped early that afternoon on a slight ridge a short distance from the forest edge. It was safer, said Pierre. They could see further. Just as they came to a halt he pointed to a mammoth cedar on a knoll some ten miles away.

"Near that tree is the post," said he. "We'll make it to-morrow."

"Why not keep on now?" argued Brant.

"Night would ketch us half way," explained Pierre. "An' there's no wood between here an' there. We'll need wood to-night—plenty of it. That's why I want to begin early. They'll come early!"

They worked furiously for hours, gathering an immense pile of fuel. It was a wise forethought. As Pierre predicted, the wolves began to gather long before nightfall. It seemed as though their success of the earlier hours had brushed away all timidity. There was no preliminary halting in the distance, no gradual drawing in of the dead line. The beasts trotted up boldly and squatted on their haunches, almost within striking distance. Their defiant howls rent the air, clamorous, insistent.

While it was still daylight, the wayfarers built two fires. It gave a sense of security to be between two barriers of leaping flame.

But with the coming of night the wolves drew still closer. The big gray leader was no longer alone in his impudence. Others trotted near from time to time, inspected the group with preternatural gravity, and then gathered opposite the open spaces between the fires. It was a significant hint. Soon Pierre had built two more fires, making a barrier of flame that hedged the travelers on all sides. It was at least potent, in that the forward wolves drew back to the pack.

The party made no pretence of eating; none even suggested food. The sled dogs whined hungrily, but there was nothing for them. Two of them were very weak—dying in fact. They lay panting with quick, staccato jerks like the running down of a mechanical toy. And still the travelers pretended cheerfulness, particularly Pierre.

"One more night," he said. "Then it'll be over. We'll have to keep awake though, to watch the fires."

Sleep would have been out of the question in any event. Little by little the wolf pack had edged in until their heads were just beyond the scorch of the flames. They were singularly like big dogs, both in looks and actions. They lay flat on their bellies, so close together that their shoulders almost touched, their front paws crossed to make a cushion for their heads. Their dull, green-glowing eyes never left the party behind the barrier of fire. It was a calm, wistful scrutiny that made the flesh wince. Famine had shrunk their hides until the ribs showed plainly. Their jaws watered and dripped with the saliva of expectancy. There was a certain pathetic eagerness in their whines. They were just primeval dogs, ravenous for food—kin of the house dog that waits patiently, with watering mouth, for the tidbit he knows he will get.

Occasionally Pierre reached out with flaming brands and smote the beasts upon the head. They were so close that one could smell the sickening odor of singed hair. It drove them back, but not to stay. Soon the burned beast would crowd back, snarling and licking his hurts. And so Pierre and Brant kept the fire high until morning.

"Another hour," said Pierre, "an' they'll pull out."

An hour passed and they did not leave. It was evident they were not going to leave. The stock of wood was almost exhausted and the clamoring beasts were between them and the forest.

Doctor Brant drew Pierre away from Louison. "What's to be done?" he whispered.

"Nothin'," said the guide hopelessly. "Just nothin' but wait. If a rescue party was within sight now it couldn't get here in time. When the fires die lower there'll be a sudden rush an'—" He gulped and dropped his arms.

"Have you cartridges in your revolver?" whispered Brant.

"Not one."

"I have two," said the doctor. "One for Louison, at the last moment; the other between us two. We'll toss for it!"

Pierre protested, but the young man had his way, tossed and *lost*. Louison had been watching. She drew over to them. "I know what it means," she said with a deep sob. Then she twined her arms suddenly around Brant's neck. "I love you," she murmured, "I love you—I love you. And I want you to know. You must hold me in your arms at the last." She drew his head down and kissed him. They clung to each other, forgetful of the time, the place—forgetful of the guide standing near by.

It was the voice of Pierre that brought them back to reality. He had been watching in surprise. "I didn't know it was this way between you," he said. "I thought Leroque was crazy. It wont hurt you to know you aint pledged to Dick any more. Leroque didn't know it himself, but Dick run off with a half breed girl the morning we left the post." Louison had given way to unrestrained sobbing. The increased howling of the wolves drew Pierre's attention.

"It's too bad," he muttered, "too bad. You're square, Doctor, dead square! Anyone else would have kept that cartridge. You don't realize what it means. Aint you got some poison in

that stuff of yours—somethin' that'll send you off quick?"

Brant's eyes lightened; then a sudden flash illuminated his face. "A quick poison!" he ejaculated. "Yes, I have—quick, almost instant, almost in a flash. Cyanides—different kinds! Deadly! sure! quick! His voice grew exultant with sudden hope. "Pierre," he cried, "would those wolves eat meat thrown to them if there was a slight odor to it?"

The guide caught the idea. He swallowed nervously. "Would they?" he repeated. "Not usually they wouldn't; but starvin' as they are, they'd probably eat anything without stoppin' even to taste it, much less smell it. Try 'em and see." He picked up a hunk of bacon and threw it out. The wolves sprang for it with frantic yelps, fought each other in a jumble until two of them won different ends. They tore it apart and bolted it in a flash.

"Quick!" screamed Brant. "The fire is dying. Louison, break up the boxes and feed the fires! Pierre, the dead dogs! Quick! Quick!"

As he spoke he wrenched the cover from a leather case. He selected two small jars and began to mix their contents in a porcelain dish, first winding a cloth about his mouth and nose and averting his head from the fumes. A faint, pleasant odor like crushed almonds arose. Pierre was busy with his knife. Louison was feeding the flames with small fragments of wood. The fires were flickering down. Just outside, the wolf pack was dancing

around, slathering at mouth, snarling. They were finding foothold, poisoning for the dash.

A few moments—it seemed a century—and the three were standing within the dying rim of the fire, their arms heaped with fragments of the dog flesh.

"Now!" shouted the doctor. "Throw far—scatter it!"

Out flew the Lethal feast and halted the wolves in their rush. The sight was terrible. They fought as though to rend each other, each ravenous.

"It's cyanide of potassium," said Brant. "But maybe it won't work on wolves. We'll see."

They had not long to wait. Those of the wolves that had eaten—some thirty—paused even as they licked their chops, then straightened up suddenly with a puzzled jerk of the head. Then a complaining howl swept through the pack and the next moment the snow was covered with prostrate wolves, writhing and snapping in a horrible death agony. In accordance with the ironic hunger laws of the Wild, the survivors of the pack were already at their throats.

Louison had fainted dead away. Brant picked her up and placed her on the sled. He stooped and kissed her gently.

"Hike quick, Pierre!" he shouted. "Harness up. Not that they'll bother us again; but I don't want her to see this when she comes to. Gee, I'm glad I gave you that cartridge!"

"THE TRACKLESS JUNGLE"

THRILLING adventures in "the trackless jungle" of the law are vividly described by Guy C. Baker in a new series of stories which are to commence in the next issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. The courtroom is a stage upon which some of life's most dramatic scenes transpire; and these stories, based upon remarkable courtroom crises, possess a vigor and intensity that will command your deepest interest.



A Slow But Reliable Boy

By ROBERT C. McELRAVY

AS MARTIN BRIGGS drove away from the office of the Bluebird mine, he chirruped briskly to old Tom and flicked at the beast's side impatiently. Old Tom responded to the boy's endeavor with his usual false show of animation, causing the meat wagon to rattle quite excitedly. Once beyond the confines of Imogene Basin, where the trail curved away and left the stamp mill, bunk houses, assay office and other buildings huddling closer and closer together with the increasing distance, the animal settled down to his ordinary rocking-horse gait.

Old Tom was not impressed with the fact that Mr. Scott, manager of the rich mining property, and his head bookkeeper, were looking rather anxiously after the departing vehicle. Martin Briggs, however, felt quite an added sense of importance this morning. For had not Mr. Scott entrusted him with a heavy package, bundled up in a gunny sack, which it had taken two men to lift into the meat box? And had he not also handed him a silver dollar, with the promise of four more to follow if Martin delivered the package safely to the charge of Royal Smith, of the local express company at Oretown? It must be given to Mr. Smith personally, in the presence of Jedd Fox, secretary of the mining company, and Martin was to be sure to get a receipt for same. Mr. Scott had promised to telephone Fox immediately, so he would be at the express office when Martin completed his six-mile trip.

Martin hoped nothing would occur to delay his journey this afternoon. His deliveries of meat and vegetable sup-

plies were always made on the up-trip, and unless he chanced to pick up a wayfarer on the trail or was halted at a ranch house for some reason, he thought it likely that no interruptions would occur. As he had assured Mr. Scott, he had made the journey up and back twice a day, except Sundays, for two years, without serious trouble.

He felt the importance of his mission particularly, from snatches of conversation he had heard between Mr. Scott and his bookkeeper, parts of which he could not understand. Mr. Scott had said he "couldn't allow his dividend showing to fall off this month just because of another Red Young scare." Martin knew, of course, that Red Young was a recognized outlaw of the San Juan region, who was forever spreading terror through the mining districts.

"It's not business, I know," Mr. Scott had remarked. "I wouldn't dream of it under ordinary circumstances, but we've just got to get this cyanide clean-up down there to-day, and I can't leave the works myself. The boy is not as fast as some, but he's dependable and always does what he's told."

Then the manager had grumbled a little over the untimeliness of Charley Jones' sickness. Charley was the bullion guard employed by the Bluebird. When Martin met him in the mornings, his saddle-bags hung heavily and he always carried a rifle swung lightly across the pommel of his saddle. Martin had always secretly envied Charley this; his own sole weapon was a little 22-caliber revolver which he carried in his hip pocket. But things were always

so slow with him on the trail that he had long since given up hope of having use for it.

Old Tom crossed a small bridge spanning the mountain stream at a point where the trail went up and then made a quick return, known as the "Switchback." This maneuver was necessitated by the sharp grade along the mountain side. As they neared the second bridge to recross the stream, Martin observed the figure of a man standing at the side of the road. The man was small of stature, wore a black mustache and had his dark, skull-tight cap pulled closely down about his ears.

"Where'd you come up from, like a Jack-in-the-Box?" greeted Martin, somewhat startled for the moment.

The man smiled. He had a sharp little face, with bright eyes, and there was a small cast in the left one which gave him a rather quizzical look.

"Was just settin' thar back of the bridge when you come along," he rejoined easily, walking up and laying a hand on the wagon seat. "Guess I'll ride with you a piece, 'f you don't object," he added, hopping nimbly up beside Martin.

"Was countin' on making a quick trip to-day," said Martin. He did not especially like the intrusion, though of course it came within the ordinary etiquette of the trail to permit it.

The stranger seemed interested and turned his quizzical glance upon Martin.

"In a hurry, eh? What's keeping Charley to-day?" he inquired nonchalantly.

Martin swung round at this and his round, boyish countenance looked out from under his dusty felt hat with new interest.

"Charley's sick to-day," he replied in a friendly tone. "Something unusual for him. Do you know Charley?" He accented the "you" in a manner inviting confidence.

The stranger's rather disappointed look dissolved in a smile. "I know 'em all, hereabouts." He noticed Martin observing him closely. "What's the matter, son?" he asked, with a trace of irritation.

"Was just wonderin'," was the frank response. "You're the first man I ever see with a black mustache and red hair."

The man pulled his cap down more closely, with a nervous jerk.

"My hair is a bit sandy around the temples," he admitted. He changed the subject abruptly. "What you got aboard to-day?"

Martin was about to say "Nothing in particular," when to his surprise the man sprang nimbly back onto the side step and raised the lid of the wagon box. The outfit consisted of an unusually heavy spring wagon, with a large, strong box built into it, capable of carrying several quarters of beef. The top of the box was like a gable roof, one side opening up like a cellar door. It was fitted with a staple and hasp for fastening it shut, the bolt being attached with a string.

"Here, you keep out o' thar!" shouted Martin, resenting the stranger's curiosity.

But the man began fumbling about in the box, for all the world as if it were his own property.

"What's this?" he asked, holding up a small package wrapped in brown paper.

"A hunk o' drief beef," returned Martin, with increasing anger.

The man continued rattling about among several empty cans and baskets. Finally he started to pick up a package in one corner, bundled up in a gunny sack. At first it did not raise at all and he gave a long, hard pull, bringing it up a few inches. Then it fell back to the floor of the box with a heavy thump.

The man drew up sharply. His eyes, when they looked at Martin, had a keen glint in them. "What's in the gunny sack?" he questioned, fairly boring a hole in the anxious youth with his concentrated gaze.

"I don't know," returned Martin, truthfully.

"Don't know?" questioned the stranger, unbelievably. He seemed lost in sudden thought. "Who gave it to you?" he finally asked, with an almost savage note in his voice.

Martin considered a moment. The man stood watching him with that

piercing look, and shifted his coat quickly about, so that the youth caught sight of a heavy gun hanging across his hip.

"Mr. Scott gave it to me," said Martin. He would gladly have dodged the question, but lacked the necessary verbal resources.

To his relief, the man suddenly slapped the lid down on the box and climbed back on the seat. "Old Scott, eh? Taking a chance at his time o' life," he murmured half audibly. Then in louder tones he said: "You must be in solid at the Bluebird to be doing favors for the old man, my boy!"

Martin breathed more freely, flushing slightly at this praise. The stranger's manner was ingratiating and Martin warmed to it.

"I don't know, sir," he answered modestly. "This is the first time Mr. Scott ever trusted me with anything important to do for him." In spite of his efforts to restrain it, there was a touch of honest pride in the boy's voice.

As they approached the Water Hole, the stranger became even more affable. He remarked teasingly about the slowness of old Tom and flicked him smartly a time or two with the whip. He seemed anxious, for some reason, to make better time.

"Would you like to earn a couple of extra dollars; son?" he asked good naturedly.

"Why, yes," responded Martin, wonderingly.

"Well, if you'll take me a quarter of a mile up the Revenue road when we reach it, I'll give you a couple of plunks for that and then a couple more for that hunk of dried beef—four dollars all told."

Martin considered again and was tempted to comply with the request. He had not disposed of the beef on the trip up and it was simply dead freight now. The Revenue road branched off a short distance the other side of the Water Hole. A quarter of a mile up that road and back would only consume a little extra time.

"I'd like to, sir," he said, revolving the matter in his mind. "But I don't much like to think of going up that road. That's where Red Young and his

gang are supposed to hold out, up in the hills there somewhere."

The stranger laughed shortly. "Not scared, are you, boy?"

Martin flushed. "No—not that. But—well, it would mean a little more time getting down the trail, and Mr. Scott said I wasn't to delay anywhere. He's paying me five dollars for this trip himself."

"You don't say?" The stranger coughed testily and then ruminated. "Well, boy, I'll just throw in a couple more dollars," he observed pleasantly. "I'm doing a little prospecting up thar now and that dried beef will come in mighty handy."

"Why don't you buy it from me when we get to the Revenue road and carry it up yourself?" questioned Martin, looking earnestly at the man. "It's not heavy."

Again there was the hint of that hard, flinty look in the man's eyes. He gave another short laugh. "Here," he said, seizing the whip and attempting to take the reins from Martin's hands, "we can be up thar while we're talking about it!"

Martin clung to the reins, but the man cut viciously at old Tom, rousing him to his fastest gait. Martin's glance followed up the trail, and with relief he discerned two men approaching on horsesback.

"Somebody's coming!" he cried eagerly.

To his astonishment, the man at his side was visibly disturbed by the announcement. He dropped the whip and hunched low in the seat, meanwhile shooting a keen look up the trail.

"Bud Stivers," he murmured. Bud was an Oretown character whom Martin knew casually as a bluff, bullying sort of fellow. But any form of relief at this time would prove welcome. He did not like being imposed upon in this way.

The stranger was plunged an instant in thought. Suddenly he turned to Martin with his broadest, most engaging smile.

"I'm going to trust you, boy," he said. "I've taken quite a fancy to you. Now, I don't like this fellow Stivers," he whispered confidingly, "and I don't

want him to see me. We had a quarrel once, and I'm not lookin' for a shootin' scrape just now."

"Why don't you drop off and hide in those bushes thar?" suggested Martin hopefully.

"No," returned the stranger quickly, "I'm in a hurry and that would set me back too long. I'm going to climb back here, and if you just keep quiet I'll see that you don't lose anything by it."

The man turned a final smile toward Martin and crept quickly back along the wagon, keeping low along the side so he could not be observed from the front. Presently there was a little snap of the wagon lid and Martin, who had been quieting Tom, realized that his passenger had crept into the wagon box, on top of all its contents.

Now Martin was not looking for a shooting affair himself at the moment. It was about the last thing he wanted. He therefore found himself in quite a predicament. He was determined not to drive up the Revenue road, as the stranger had asked, and yet he felt that he might be forced to do so if he let Bud Stivers and his companion ride past without appealing to them for help. He was not naturally a rapid thinker, but as the two horsemen approached, Martin's brow was knit in serious cogitation.

Old Tom drew up at the Water Hole, fed by a mountain spring, and put his nose in the improvised trough, as was his custom twice each day. The trail here was at its highest point, overlooking the stream in the depths of the canyon from a height of fully two hundred feet.

"Hey, Martin!" greeted Bud Stivers jovially. "Is the trail quiet to-day?"

"Why, yes, I guess it is," returned the perplexed youth.

"Aint seen anything of Red Young, have yuh?"

Martin shook his head negatively. He now recognized Stiver's companion as another Oretown fellow of rough character. "I've heard of him, but guess I never laid eyes on him," he remarked, more for the purpose of keeping up casual conversation than anything else.

"Well, thar's a thousand dollars offered to the feller who delivers him

over to Sheriff Peters, dead or alive," announced Stivers importantly. "He's supposed to be hangin' around here purty clost now. We ruther hope to turn him up some time before night-fall."

"I hope you will," returned Martin, catching up the reins as old Tom ceased drinking. For himself, he was not looking for additional trouble. He was having quite enough worry with the insistent individual hiding in his wagon box.

He watched Stivers and his companion ride slowly along, half tempted to call them back and turn them loose upon the stranger. But he reflected that this would mean bloodshed, if there really were an old quarrel between the fellow and Stivers.

A timely idea now presented itself to Martin's leisurely mind. It came just as the lid of the wagon box was being cautiously raised.

"Is the coast clear, son?" whispered the stranger from beneath the lid.

Martin drew old Tom to a quick stop. "Just a moment!" he whispered back.

The lid dropped down obediently.

Martin stretched his strong young body back over the side and quickly snapped the hasp over the staple. Then he dropped the bolt into its proper place and whipped an open padlock out of his pocket. This he also fastened into the staple and closed it till it clicked. He was taking no chances now; the lid was down and Martin intended to keep it down, at least for the present.

A moment later he heard the stranger's head bump up against the lid and was conscious of a strained effort to raise it from the inside. Perhaps the stranger was surprised. A curious, hollow voice, like the sound one makes when talking into a rain barrel, argued that he was not only surprised but angry as well.

Martin could not help it. This might not be the etiquette of the trail, but he had tried etiquette once and it had failed. Now he would try something else.

He whipped old Tom and went clattering down toward the point where

the Revenue trail branched off. The stranger's efforts to raise the lid continued, but Martin felt satisfied the box would hold together. It was stoutly built and the man had not sufficient elbow room for hard pounding.

After a moment the stranger called Martin by name and asked him to slow up and talk a minute. Martin reluctantly complied, though his whole thought now was getting to Oretown without further loss of time.

"What do you mean by locking me in here?" questioned the unwelcome passenger in heated tones. Martin heard him add a string of curses to the query.

"I don't know why I did, sir," responded Martin, with characteristic honesty. "I guess I just wanted a chance to think matters over without you bothering at me."

The stranger was silent a moment and then spoke with a considerably modified tone. "I'll tell you what I'll do, boy," he said after a moment. "If you'll let me out at the Revenue trail, I'll give you ten dollars in gold for your dried beef and all the trouble I've put you to, and let you go on to Oretown without further delay."

Martin pondered the proposition. Nothing would suit him better than to get rid of this fellow now, without a cent of his money. It was the munificent offer which caused him to hesitate. He had done nothing to earn ten dollars, and certainly that small piece of dried beef was worth no such price.

"I'll see," he replied dubiously, whipping old Tom into a trot.

When the Revenue road was reached, Martin slowed up again to think the situation over. To his surprise, a man popped out from a clump of aspen trees at the roadside.

"Say, son," he shouted, "what you got to eat with you? I'm nigh starved to death!"

Martin did not like the man's looks. He was just such another inquisitive looking fellow as the one in his wagon box.

"Nary a thing for you," he replied, not offering to stop.

But the fellow was up on the step, like a cat. He began pulling at the bolt.

"You leave that lid be!" cried Martin

angrily. The fellow paid no attention, but kept pulling at the bolt. In a moment he had it out, but the padlock still held the hasp in place.

"I'll soon have that off!" he said, jumping down to get a rock from the roadside, to use in smashing the lock.

But Martin had by this time conceived another idea. He fumbled a moment in his hip pocket and when the fellow had picked up the rock he found himself looking straight up into a small 22-caliber revolver, grasped in a small but determined hand.

"Hands up!" commanded a youthful voice in genuine earnest. Martin had fondly dreamed of such a moment as this many times.

The rock fell to the ground and the fellow's hands shot into the air.

"All right, son," came the instant reply. Not for a moment did he question the authority of the weapon into which he was looking. It was small, but quite large enough for the purpose.

Then an odd thing happened. Until now Martin's passenger had maintained strict silence. But upon hearing the surrender of the man at the roadside, he began setting up a rapid series of calls. To Martin he seemed to be calling, "Joe! Joe! Joe!"

But to the man at the roadside, already shivering with apprehension, this was simply an unexpected and terrifying noise, almost supernatural in its import. With a horrified look at the wagon box, whence came these mysterious sounds, the fellow turned and ran headlong into the clump of aspen trees, hands still upheld and quivering in every fiber like the quaking aspen themselves.

Martin whipped up old Tom and sped down along the trail. His face was pale and even the hand upon his revolver seemed white in the gathering dusk. But the feeling passed quickly and he knew now that with no further delays he would soon be out of the canyon and near the edge of Oretown.

His passenger had succumbed to wordy rage, in which almost every form of invective cropped out. Presently he called Martin by name.

"Yes," replied the boy absently.

"Why didn't you stop and talk with

Joe?" came the question. "He could have explained everything. He was a friend of mine."

Martin was not given to repartee, though what he said now might well have been classified as such. "That's what I was afraid of," he answered, flicking old Tom with the whip.

At the power house, where the waters of the mountain stream were converted into electrical power for the mines of the vicinity, Martin saw the engineer wave at him from his window. Ordinarily he would have stopped to see what was wanted, but not this time. He merely urged old Tom along, much to the engineer's apparent disgust.

Everything seemed to tend toward delay.

Mrs. Wilkins' cabin was just inside the mouth of the canyon. Martin usually paused to accept letters from her to be mailed at the post office, but he hoped she would be out of calling distance now. She always wanted to talk over every little personal affair of the district, having a ready ear for the latest gossip. He prayed that he might miss her to-day.

"Say!" cried the stranger from the wagon box, desperately.

"Yes," answered Martin again.

"If you don't let me out of here inside o' two minutes, I'm going to shoot this gun in your direction!"

Martin heard the stranger draw his weapon ominously across the lid of the box.

"Better not," he advised. "Twouldn't hurt much, coming through the box and this h'yere seat. Besides, old Tom might take a notion to jump clear off the side o' this mountain, he hates shootin' so."

"I wouldn't care, 'f he'd bust this cussed box open!" shouted the stranger, but he was silent for a time.

Mrs. Wilkins' cabin came into view. Martin's heart sank, for he discerned Mrs. Wilkins waiting for him.

"You're behind time to-day," she called to him.

"Yes, I am," conceded Martin, drawing Tom up deferentially, but not offering to stop.

"Wait a minute!" cried Mrs. Wilkins, waving a letter toward him.

"All right," groaned Martin. "But please hurry. I'm behind time and must get in soon now."

Mrs. Wilkins came out to the wagon, talking garrulously about neighborhood affairs.

Just as Martin had taken her letter in the midst of breathless silence on his part, the stranger in the box, recognizing the voice as a woman's, set up a plea for assistance.

"Help! Help!" he shouted—adding "Murder!" as an afterthought calculated to inspire interference of some sort.

Mrs. Wilkins shrieked and went deathly white.

"In God's name, Martin, what was that?" she cried.

But Martin only applied the whip without answering. As he did so, a restrained roar shook the vehicle, and looking back he saw a white place where a bullet from the stranger's gun had torn away a splinter in passing through the lid. His eye caught also the terrifying glimpse of a man on horseback, far back on the trail, riding toward him at break-neck speed.

It flashed into Martin's mind that this rider might be the fellow who had run so precipitately into the clump of quaking asp trees. Perhaps he had thought over the matter more clearly and decided to come to the rescue of his friend in the wagon box.

Again Martin brought the whip down on old Tom's back and the wagon plunged ahead, leaving Mrs. Wilkins standing with pale, wondering features at the roadside.

At last they emerged from the canyon and were on the last lap of the trail. Martin imagined he could hear the hoofbeats of the pursuing horseman, and held his small revolver in readiness for an exchange of shots if such a contingency became necessary.

Inside the town, Martin breathed more easily. The man following would scarcely attempt a rescue here.

He bowed distantly to several people. One of these asked if he was carrying smoked meats these days. Looking back Martin saw smoke gushing through the cracks in the wagon box. He wondered vaguely if the stranger's

shot had set fire to the interior of the vehicle.

But he didn't care; he would stop for nothing now. At least the man within the box was very quiet. Behind, he could plainly hear the pursuing hoof-beats.

With aching heart he urged old Tom to a final burst of speed. Never before had he whipped the faithful animal so severely. He would make up for this when the trip was over. The thought submerged him in a wave of tenderness, as they pounded along. His widowed mother? What would she do if harm came to him?

At last old Tom turned in upon Main street. The man behind was now very close, but it was only a short block to the express office.

In a mental daze Martin drove the intervening distance, just as the horseman overtook him. Then he discovered that it was not the man of the quaking asps at all, but merely Bud Stivers racing recklessly back over the trail, with his companion following at a more leisurely pace behind. They had suddenly decided to abandon their effort to capture Red Young.

At the express office, Martin was greeted by Royal Smith, Jedd Fox, Sheriff Peters and a curious group of Oretown citizens.

"What kept you so long, boy?" asked Jedd Fox, the strained look on his face betraying his anxiety. He had apparently called the sheriff, fearing trouble had occurred on the trail.

"I—I was detained by several people on the road," replied Martin. He somehow felt rather weak now. "But I've got the package for you and Mr. Smith."

Jed Fox seemed immensely relieved. "Open the box," he shouted.

"Wait a minute," interposed Martin, jumping down from his seat. "Somebody's in thar."

"Somebody in there!" repeated several voices in concert.

"Yes, thar is—a man who 'lowed he'd ride with me whether I wanted him or not. I wanted to get rid o' him, but he got to fumbling around among the packages and wanted to take one o' them—

he said it was the dried beef—but I was afraid he wanted Mr. Scott's package. So—so I locked him in and kep' him thar."

"What fer a-lookin' feller is he?" questioned the sheriff, striding forward.

"He's got a black mustache and red hair and squints with one eye," described Martin.

"Give me the key to that padlock, boy," said Sheriff Peters, in nervous haste. Martin gladly complied and the lock was quickly sprung.

Everyone fell back but the officer, who kept a gun trained carefully upon the aperture when the lid was raised.

But there was no special need for caution. Inside the box crouched Martin's passenger, stiff from his cramped position and weak from the close air and the fumes of his own gun.

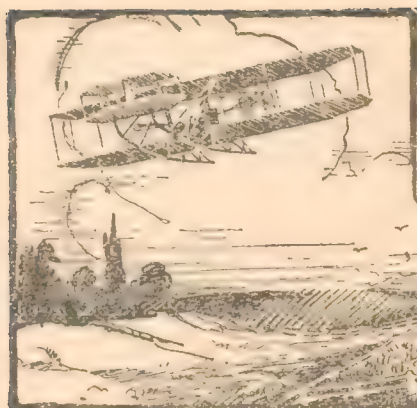
The sheriff raised the limp figure to the reviving influence of the outer air, after carefully disarming him. Then he whipped off the skull-tight cap and it was seen that the man's hair was fiery red. His mustache had apparently been dyed black.

"Red Young, by thunder!" exploded the delighted officer. "The wust little bandit we've had in these parts fer many years. Boy, this job means just one thousand dollars in cold cash fer you; and I, fer one, am right glad to see you git it!"

Everybody present seemed glad also, and Martin was quite overcome with congratulations. He had not realized that he had so many friends in Oretown who wished him well.

With his arm wound caressingly about old Tom's neck, he told his story of the trip. It was all very simple as it had occurred, and he could not yet sense the meaning of it all. He had never dreamed that the intrusive stranger could be Red Young himself.

But Martin's surprise at having captured the notorious bandit was not so great as his consternation when he saw Mr. Scott's package unwrapped in the express office. He then learned for the first time that to his faithful hands had that day been entrusted two gleaming yellow bars of gold bullion, valued at approximately twenty thousand dollars.



Tales of Twenty Hundred

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

A CRIME, a rescue and a trial—all conducted according to the methods of the Twenty-first Century—are most graphically described in this story. And the dramatic circumstance which leads to the climax, is of the sort calculated to give you a real thrill.

No. VI—THE PSYCHOGRAPH

I

IN THE SUBTREASURY

VICTOR BLAKE, leaning over the side of the *aéroplane*, studied for a moment the massive tower of the United States' Subtreasury which they were rapidly approaching. The huge official time-piece, which transmitted a record of the hours throughout the city and called sonorously the flight of time at every quarter, indicated eight twenty-five.

"Nearly half-past eight, Arlie," said Blake, withdrawing himself into the car, "and in just an hour we are due at the Temple of Justice."

Arline Fortescue received the announcement with a gay laugh.

"Why, Victor," she answered, "half an hour in those grim old chambers where the nation hoards its wealth will more than suffice. We shall arrive in ample time to witness the demonstration. It may be a whim, a caprice, but as I told you yesterday when you secured the pass, I wish to make sure that your radium—*our* radium—is still in the government vaults."

Blake smiled fondly and patted his sweetheart's hand.

"Dear heart," said he, "what could happen to our billion dollars' worth of radium, stored so securely and guarded night and day by lynx-eyed officials?"

"Nothing, I suppose, but nevertheless I want to see the containers with my own eyes."

"And so you shall," he returned. "If there is anything I can do to bring you a little comfort or peace of mind, the pleasure is all my own. But please,"—and his hand tightened around hers for one reassuring moment—"do not take the perils of my great work too seriously."

Before Arlie could answer, the pilot switched the power from the propellers and turned it into the helicopters. The *aéroplane* came to a halt in midair, supported by the horizontal blades; then, slowly, gently, it settled downward and came to rest in a landing stage on the Subtreasury roof.

A uniformed guard started out from the sentry-box in the shadow of the tower. He stood at respectful attention while Blake assisted Arline out of the car and down the short flight of steps.

"Good morning, Officer," said Blake. "Here is my authority."

He presented a paper signed by

Colonel Croffut, Overseer, which read: "Pass Mr. Victor Blake and Miss Arline Fortescue into the vaults for a brief inspection of the radium room."

The officer returned the paper, touched his cap, and crossed a dozen yards of flagging to the roof door. He pressed a button. Somewhere in the cavernous depths a gong sounded faintly. "Well?" came a brusque interrogation through the door 'phone.

The officer placed his lips to a transmitter. "Mr. Victor Blake and one, with a pass from Colonel Croffut, to inspect the radium room," he announced.

A heavy mechanism could be heard grinding at the bolts. The door swung inward and a burst of radium-light streamed upward over a stone stairway. The visitors entered and descended; the door closed and the bolts ground back into place; then down and down descended the two, their steps awakening odd echoes between the massive walls.

Another uniformed officer met them, gravely examined the pass, then pressed a button. As if by magic a third man in blue and brass buttons presented himself.

"Mr. Blake and Miss Fortescue, Jameson," said the superintendent, "for a brief inspection of the radium room."

"This way, please."

Through the vaulted silence the visitors followed their guide. At the touch of a lever in the grim wall more mechanism was set in motion. A doorway yawned in the thick granite, leading deep into Erebus. The pressure of a button brought light, and a long passage was revealed. Without a word, yet with a bearing at once considerate and kindly, the guide led them on, the girl a little pale and clinging tightly to the arm of her escort.

They halted before an iron door bearing a big white letter "R." The guide fingered a switch.

"Admit us, Hallowell," he called into a transmitter.

From the office the superintendent touched a combination of white buttons and cleared the way into the billion-dollar treasure chamber. The girl drew a long, quivering breath as they passed into the confines of the stone room. A huge door swung noiselessly back on its

hinges, and the clank of bolts could be heard fitting into their unseen sockets. Blake laughed, his merriment echoing uncannily and splintering away into wisps of strident sound.

"You might as well sit down," said the guide.

His manner had changed. No longer was his bearing obsequious, or even considerate. His words clicked like steel on steel. The one ceiling-bowl that lighted the place glowed dimly. In the semi-gloom, the guide's lean face was picked out with resolute shadows. He pushed two chairs to the center of the chamber.

"Look," he went on, as the visitors, vaguely disturbed, seated themselves, "look at those rows upon rows of containers." His arm, like an elongated shadow, swept around in a circle. Squat shapes, barely distinguishable, stood tier on tier against the walls, hemming in guide and visitors in a hollow square. "A billion dollars' worth of radium! The world was ransacked to bring it together, here in this vault of the Sub-treasury. And for what purpose? To minister to the dream of a madman, of a man whose designs would wreck the world!"

Blake sprang to his feet with an angry exclamation. Arlie gave vent to a fluttering cry and caught at his arm.

"What do you mean?" Blake demanded, facing the guide with eyes flashing. "What authority have you, as an employee of the government, to use such language?"

"Be calm, Victor Blake." The guide's voice was colorless. "Sit down again while I explain. You will be interested, I think, in what I have to tell you."

The trembling hand on Blake's sleeve exerted a convulsive pressure. He resumed his chair.

"Don't be nervous, Arlie," he murmured, passed his arm about the girl's waist. "There is nothing to worry over."

"Mr. Blake," continued the guide, "your monstrous plan for straightening the axis of the Earth, thereby bringing, according to your theory, perpetual spring to this latitude and fixity of the seasons for every country on the globe, seems on the point of fulfillment. Last night representatives of the Quadruple

Alliance signed protocols whereby you were empowered to proceed with your stupendous undertaking. Last night, too, communication was established with Mars. The people of our sister planet, if their messages are to be taken in good faith, are following closely the smallest detail of the myriad lives upon this Earth. Mars tells us that she follows our undertakings, across those millions of miles of space—that she knows of our smallest endeavors and for hundreds of years has chronicled our progress. I say that those messages are false—lies, all of them. Mars avers that she will keep track of your career, and through achievements which we are not fitted to understand, will protect you and aid you. For this, you are to aid them in straightening the Martian axis."

The guide chuckled derisively.

"The axis of Mars," he proceeded, "has an even greater inclination than that of Earth. If the Martians have progressed so far in the arts and sciences, why must they call on the intelligence of this planet for anything? They show a lack of logic which stamps their other claims as spurious.

"This radium which you have collected is necessary, you say, to the success of your wild schemes. You are to draw upon its power in tilting the Earth backward, so that we may float through space, so to speak, on an even keel. The government has stored the radium for you; and infinite care has been taken in covering every step of your plan. But the government has failed.

"At this moment, or very shortly, the man called Dominguez, a Brazilian, is to face his inquisitors in the Temple of Justice. What is his crime? As a secret agent of the Latin peoples, he was sent to this Republic to do what he could to prevent your tampering with the machinery of the universe. The voice of the Latin peoples has risen in protest against your scheme, but the protest had no effect. The Quadruple Alliance has tendered you the support of four-fifths of the inhabitants of the globe, and the prayers and entreaties of the remaining fifth are given no consideration. Again and again your life has been imperiled, but always, until now, you

have escaped the blows leveled at you. Victor Blake, at last your hour has struck!"

Blake, supporting the fainting girl at his side, sat rigidly erect in his chair. Had he to deal with a madman, or was this a fanatic who had planned cunningly and to some purpose? He remained silent, eyeing the guide keenly, his thoughts wavering and unsteady.

"Do the Martians know," continued the guide with a lilt of triumph in his voice, "that the secret agents from the South have wrought cleverly for your undoing? Do they know how, when it was learned that you were to visit the Subtreasury, the agents bribed the driver of the aeroplane that brought you here, bribed the guard at the tower, bribed the superintendent? Do those wonderful people of Mars understand how I, one of the agents, was made a guide for this one occasion only?

"Blake, under this chamber has been planted a blast which will crumble these massive walls to dust! That explosion will burst and scatter the radium in those containers! In one quick cataclysm, the material for your awful experiment will be destroyed; and you, the author of the plan, will be lost in that fearful havoc. This is the final word of protest voiced by the people of the South. It will suffice."

The ringing echoes of the guide's voice died slowly away in the chamber. It had carried conviction to Blake. His hopes died to ashes, and his blood curdled under the lash of the agent's tongue. But the horror was this, that Arlie must be involved in the wreck that comprehended not only his hopes but his life. He sat as one stunned.

"When the clock in the Subtreasury tower points to high noon," went on the other impassively, "the hands will form an electrical connection. The spark that follows will usher in *the end*."

Arlie was drooping in Blake's arms, limp and unconscious. He arose slowly and, with tender hands, lowered her across the two chairs.

Was this really to be the end? Was the dream of his life to go out in one devastating convulsion at high noon? Was Arlie to pay for her love for him and her loyalty with her young life?

This one thought, lifting itself high above the tumult in his brain, maddened him. He whirled and sprang at the guard like a tiger.

The man struggled, but his powers were feeble compared with those of the enraged Blake. Pinning him to the wall remorselessly, Blake hissed in his face:

"And you! What is to become of *you* in all this riot of death and destruction?"

The man smiled under the tensely gripping fingers.

"It is my glory," he murmured, "to die for those who sent me. I have been faithful. I take from you no more than I give myself. Kill me now, if you will; or wait, and we shall go together."

With a fierce exclamation Blake hurled him heavily to the stone floor. There he lay, silent, still, perhaps already a martyr to what he conceived to be his duty.

Blake ran and knelt by the crumpled form in the chairs. He pressed a kiss upon the white, parted lips, then lifted his frantic eyes.

"Mars! Mars!" he cried chokingly, "do you know? do you hear? Is it all a lie?"

II

THE TEMPLE OF JUSTICE.

"Let the prisoner stand forth."

A rare scene, unique so far as the customs of this earlier age are concerned, was being enacted in that Temple of Justice of the year A. D. 2050. All courts were courts of first and last resort in that strange era of the Twenty-first Century. The high justice, the middle and the low were dispensed at the same bench and bar. Inventive genius had made error impossible, and from their judgment there was no appeal. "Demonstration" had taken the place of trial; psychologists presided in lieu of judges, and there were no attorneys for people or defendant. Prisoners were arraigned without delay; their guilt or their innocence demonstrated, and freedom or punishment swiftly followed.

Court was held in a room where the grimness of judicial procedure was distinguished by its absence. Broad windows admitted the sunshine by day, and

a softened glow pilfered from the great luminary by night. Thick rugs covered the floor; spacious chairs were scattered invitingly about, and there was a table at which sat three eminent psychologists representing the state.

Along one wall was a strip of blackboard. In front of this blackboard rested a movable arm tipped with a piece of white crayon. The shoulder from which the arm depended was a thing of delicate and complicated mechanism, glistening in its polished parts. This was the psychograph, the invention of which in the year 2000 had revolutionized court proceedings everywhere.

A prisoner's lips may lie, but his innermost thoughts deal always with the truth. Not the spoken word but the thought behind it was drawn upon by the psychograph, and guilt or innocence was traced clearly upon the blackboard.

A phono-photographic record of the demonstration was made, second by second as it progressed. With its double appeal to eye and ear, the whole affair could be reproduced whenever it might become necessary, for records were stored away in the archives of the Department of Justice.

In this pleasant chamber of scientific demonstration (a chamber of horrors for the guilty) there were assembled the state psychologists, the prisoner in charge of a municipal officer, and a limited number of observers. Just before Professor Leigh, the chief psychologist, called the prisoner forth, a man with red hair had entered the room quietly and taken his seat. And hardly had the words left the professor's lips when a young man arose deferentially and asked to be heard.

"Speak out," said Professor Leigh.

"My name is Tom Bryce, if it please you, and I wish to state that my friend, Victor Blake, against whom the crime to be demonstrated here this morning was leveled, has not yet reached the Hall of Justice. I respectfully request a postponement until Mr. Blake arrives."

"The hour for the demonstration was nine-thirty," answered the chief psychologist, "and we can wait no longer."

Without comment or protest, Tom Bryce again seated himself. The man with the red hair stood up and sought a

hearing. Professor Leigh nodded permission for him to speak.

"I am Henry Penhallon, if it please you, and my business is that of an air-pilot. It was my work to bring Mr. Blake and Miss Arline Fortescue to the Subtreasury, this morning, in a machine belonging to Miss Fortescue's uncle. They visited the radium room. When they returned I was dismissed, and they took a service flyer into the country. I was asked by Mr. Blake to come here and report that he was away on important business and could not attend the demonstration."

Henry Penhallon sat down. Tom Bryce stared at him with troubled eyes but held his peace.

"That being the case," announced Professor Leigh, "we may proceed."

In response to his order, given a few moments before, an officer had ushered the prisoner to the front. He was a swarthy man with dark, restless eyes. There was a pronounced air of bravado in the set of his shoulders and the poise of his head.

"Your name?" queried the chief psychologist.

"Dominguez," was the response.

"Is that your true name?"

"It will serve."

"No matter, now. Your country?"

"Brazil."

Professor Leigh settled back in his chair and cast a swift glance at his *confrères* on left and right. Then he proceeded at length:

"Dominguez of Brazil, you are accused of being a secret agent, sent to this Republic for the purpose of subverting the plans of one Victor Blake, who is engaged in the stupendous task of straightening the terrestrial axis. You, with others, are accused of attempting many times the life of said Blake; and you are accused, also, of seeking by criminal methods to influence the actions of representatives of the Quadruple Alliance. Last night, while the Interplanetary Communication Company was trying to get its first message from our neighboring planet, Mars, you bribed the inventor of the black ray to cast a crimson cloud around the tip of the aluminum finger; from this cloud you spoke to the Inter-

planetary Company, thereby making it appear that a voice had crossed the billions of miles separating Earth and Mars. In this manner you warned the representatives not to sign the protocols. Your astounding chicanery would have proved successful had not an authentic communication been received from our sister planet. Of all this you stand accused, Dominguez of Brazil. What is your plea?"

"Not guilty," said the Brazilian.

"You are known to have negotiated with the inventor of the black ray and to have paid him fifty thousand dollars of the new standard for permission to use the ray in committing this crime against the nations. Credible witnesses, who have been tested by psychograph, declare this. In the face of such evidence do you still hold to your plea of not guilty?"

"I am not guilty!" shouted the prisoner.

"Officer, adjust the psychograph."

Dominguez, somewhat awed, was led to the machine under the blackboard. Here he was seated in a chair. A leathern cap was drawn over his head, a cap bristling with small, inverted cup-shaped discs from each of which radiated a slender wire. Bracelets of leather, with other discs and wires, were buckled around his wrists over the bounding pulse. The prisoner had lost his bravado completely. His bewilderment was fast growing into a sort of dumb terror.

"The switch, officer," said the chief psychologist.

A thumbscrew was turned and a soft, purring sound ran through the room. The arm of the psychograph began to move, and the crayon to trace a line on the blackboard. The psychologists watched the unfolding line with keen, critical eyes. It undulated up and down, back and forth—now rising in an inverted loop, and now descending in a graceful curve. Each of the two men beside Professor Leigh drew a deep breath, took his eyes from the blackboard and nodded gravely to his superior.

"That will do for the moment, officer," said the chief psychologist. "What do you find, gentlemen?" he added, turning to his *confrères*.

"I find that the prisoner is of sound mind, although laboring under an excess of excitement," reported the scientist on the left.

"I agree with Professor Hauptman," added Professor Beckman, on the right.

"Then, traces of any and every form of insanity being absent, we shall proceed to demonstrate the guilt or innocence of the accused."

Professor Leigh nodded toward the official beside the prisoner. That minion of the law lifted the crayon from the blackboard and returned it to a starting point below the first tracing.

The chief psychologist pressed a button in the table before him. Instantly, under the prisoner's eyes, a back curtain fell from the wall and revealed a large portrait of Victor Blake.

The psychograph was still purring its occult song. At this sudden view of the man against whom his treacherous plots had been directed, Dominguez started in his chair. At once the crayon leaped across the blackboard, twisting, writhing, dashing off sharp angles, climbing high peaks of cunning and digging deep pits of guile. Running on and on in its frantic course, the crayon came quickly to the end of the board.

A breathless silence filled the room. Three volumes, containing translations of psychograph markings, lay open before the *savants*. A rustle of hurriedly turned leaves filled the room like whispers of life and death. Those marks, drawn from the inner workings of the Brazilian's mind, were as clear in their meaning as the spoken language.

Leigh signaled the officer to shut off the psychograph. "What do you find, Professor Hauptman?" he asked.

Professor Hauptman arose.

"Honored sir," said he, "I find a plain record of many lawless crimes directed at the life of Victor Blake, and I find indisputable evidence of the crime of last night. Also," —Hauptman's voice grew tense— "I find thoughts concerning Blake and complications of a grave nature in which he is involved at this moment. The psychographic interpretations of Boudy Leclerc—interpretations which, as you know, have withstood the test of application for forty years—indicate the Subtreasury, a planned explo-

sion, a faithless guard, a treacherous superintendent, a mortal enemy of Blake's in masquerade as a guide, a subsidized air pilot and, finally, the Lethal point focused upon the hour of twelve, high noon."

The nerves of all in the room were stretched to tightest tension. Bryce, the friend of Blake, was leaning forward in his chair with gleaming eyes and pallid face. The representatives of the Quadruple Alliance stirred restlessly. Penhallon, the pilot, twisted uncomfortably in his seat.

"Professor Beckman," said the chief psychologist, "what have you to say?"

"I concur, honored sir," answered Beckman, slowly rising, "with the terms of Professor Hauptman's report; but I also find that Clarke's curve in his book of 'Criminal Interpretations' suggests electrical effect upon contact of the two hands of the Subtreasury clock at high twelve. The result, unless interfered with, will mean the annihilation of Victor Blake, and—"

A despairing cry rang through the room. From somewhere came the claron tones of a bell striking twelve. Bryce, darting to his feet, hurled himself out of the place, haggard and distraught. Penhallon rose to follow him.

"Stop that man!" cried the chief psychologist, rising and leveling an accusing finger at the pilot. "He is implicated by the mental chart of the Brazilian!" Half a dozen men started after Penhallon. He made as though he would flee, but halted suddenly. A crack sounded through the room, similar to the whip-like snap of an electrical discharge. Penhallon reeled, flung out his hands and fell backward.

A group of curious men gathered around the stricken pilot. He was dead. The only sign of violence about him was a point of red between the eyes.

III

MARS INTERFERES.

Tom Bryce, who loved Victor Blake as a brother, dashed from the Temple of Justice in wild alarm. Twelve had struck. But the tolling hour had not been followed by the sodden echoes of

an explosion. He took heart of grace, hailed a service flyer and leaped aboard.

"The Subtreasury!" he cried.

Aéroplanes were hovering around the tower of the government treasure-house like so many bees around a hive. A detachment of officers was drawn up on the roof, and at the foot of the tower three still forms were lying side by side. What had happened? was the question that tortured Bryce's mind.

Tumbling out of the aéroplane in the Subtreasury hangar, he started toward the tower. Two officers stayed him. "Keep back!" they ordered gruffly.

"But I am a friend of Victor Blake!" cried Bryce. "I have just come from the Temple of Justice. Blake is in danger! Not a moment must be lost!"

"You are too late," said one of the officers.

Bryce staggered back, his hands at his throat. "Too late?" he echoed.

The officer laughed. "Yes, too late. He has been saved already. Colonel Croffut is below, taking his statement."

A grievous load dropped from Bryce.

"How was Blake saved, officer?" he inquired eagerly.

The man in uniform took Bryce by the arm and led him to the foot of the tower.

"It was the same force," he explained, "that struck these traitors lifeless in their tracks. The only sign of injury is that spot of red between the eyes. That man"—the officer indicated one of the

prostrate forms—"was the roof-guard. That one in the middle was the superintendent. The other was acting as guide, but he is not known to Colonel Croffut. All were traitors. What struck them down? It was the same power that stripped away locks and bolts and flung every door wide for Blake's escape from the radium room. We do not know what it was. Blake says that, in his extremity, he appealed to Mars, and that Mars answered."

Bryce listened as one fascinated.

"Mars!" he exclaimed. "Why—why, Blake is under the protection of the Red Planet! They have told him, across those unreckoned leagues of space, the Martians, that they were his friends. He appealed to them—and they answered!"

"It is hard to understand," mused the puzzled officer, "but a kinetophone message arrived a few minutes ago from Professor Bryden, of the Interplanetary Company. Bryden declared that a message had just come from the Martians in which those of the other planet state that Blake was rescued by them by means of *apergy*, a force we know nothing about. It—it's hard to understand," he repeated, drawing a dazed hand across his eyes.

The roof-door opened and Blake, haggard and worn by his recent ordeal, stepped through. Arline, bearing up bravely, clung to his arm. With a shout of joy, Bryce ran towards them with outstretched hands.

When There's a Woman in the Case

By WALTER NOBLE BURNS

YOU'VE a hard case on your hands," said the assistant prosecuting attorney.

"On the contrary, a very clear one," replied the prosecutor.

The two men stood in the prosecutor's office in the Criminal court build-

ing. The prosecutor, an iron-gray man with a pale, aquiline face, had his arms full of law books. He was just starting to prosecute the Jennie Williamson murder case.

"You seem to forget the defendant is a pretty woman," said the assistant.

"What difference does it make whether she's pretty or not?"

"It makes all the difference in the world with a jury. Remember the 'unwritten law' is still—er, well—is still the 'unwritten law.'"

"You will have your little joke."

"It is true," declared the assistant warmly. "You read in almost every paper you pick up nowadays, how some woman who has killed a man has been freed by a jury. You read of its occurring in the South to-day, in the North to-morrow, in the West the day after. All a woman has to do in court is to look woe-begone and heart-broken and to weep now and then. If she is an actress, as most women are, and can maintain her tragic pose to the end, her acquittal is a foregone conclusion. The time has come when it would seem the dear creatures can shoot us down with impunity whenever they feel like it."

"The women who are freed on murder charges are doubtless freed on sound legal grounds."

"On the contrary, they are almost invariably freed either directly or indirectly by the 'unwritten law'—by men's chivalrous sentiment and nothing else. Most of the murders committed by women have a strong family resemblance. They differ principally in method. They are usually heart tragedies. They grow out of broken hearts, blighted affections, wrecked lives, jealousy, revenge. The man in the case has wronged the woman, deceived her, betrayed her, deserted her for another."

"There you are," said the prosecutor. "These women have been wronged past endurance. Their wrongs have unbalanced them. Something in their brain has snapped. I can easily see how a plea of temporary insanity might lie in such cases."

"On the contrary, the greater number of such murders are committed in cold blood. The woman has a grievance—yes—but what murderer has not? But she does not kill in the heat of passion. She arms herself coolly, plans her murder with careful deliberation, hunts up her victim, and shoots him down."

"You exaggerate. In a case in which

a woman murders a man in cold blood, I believe that nine times out of ten an American jury will convict her."

The assistant prosecutor smiled.

"How many murders have been committed by women in the United States in the last ten years?" he asked.

"I have no way of knowing," rejoined the prosecutor.

"You admit the number has been quite large?"

"Such cases have not been infrequent."

"How many women have been hanged for murder in the United States in the last ten years? Will you answer me that? You can count them on the fingers of your hand!"

"Well," said the prosecutor, setting down his law books upon his desk, "I should think perhaps you could. But I have no statistics. Besides, your ground is not well taken. We have not at hand the evidence upon which so many women have been acquitted on murder charges. Unless we know the evidence, we cannot form an opinion on the merits of the cases or tell to what extent the 'unwritten law' figured in them. I still insist that American juries to-day are influenced alone by the law and the evidence. In a matter in which a principle is at stake, juries are no longer swayed by sentiment. This is the age of reason. The time has gone by when a woman can win acquittal by mere beauty or coquetry, by weeping demurely into a lace handkerchief or by dandling a baby on her knee. Woman has no more right under the law than man. A woman who has committed a crime should be punished just as a man should. If, under certain circumstances, a man should be sentenced to death, under the same circumstances, a woman should not be permitted to escape the gallows. Justice should not discriminate between sexes, creeds, color or classes. It should be meted out to all alike, rich and poor, black and white, man and woman. The integrity of our social and political fabric depends upon the equal administration of the law."

"Then you hope to secure a conviction in this case against Jennie Williamson?"

"Hope to? I feel quite confident of it. Jennie Williamson murdered her husband in a heartless way that might suggest that she was graduated from the mediaeval school of Italian poisoners. The evidence is circumstantial but conclusive. I shall ask the death penalty."

"But do you expect to secure it?"

"I do, assuredly."

"Remember, Jennie Williamson is an extremely pretty woman."

"Don't be absurd, my dear fellow," laughed the prosecutor, gathering up his books and starting off for the court-room. "That will make no difference at all. I rely upon the law and the evidence."

John Williamson was a street car motorman who had lived alone with his wife in a small flat in a workingman's quarter. He was a sober, steady man of fifty, a domestic man, loving his home and his wife. He worked hard all day with steady and patient cheerfulness, ate his three meals with a hearty appetite and slept soundly at night. He asked little of the world and was happy in his own plodding way.

Mrs. Williamson was only about half as old as her husband. The daughter of a small shopkeeper, she had considered herself very fortunate and indeed had been the envy of her girl friends when she had achieved a motorman for a husband and moved into a neat little home of her own. Plump to the verge of stoutness, she was a blooming young matron with bright blue eyes, pink cheeks, red lips and yellow hair. There was no hint of refinement in her full-blooded personality but no one would have denied her a healthy animal beauty.

Mrs. Williamson's love for her husband, if indeed she ever had had any in the first place, had long grown cold. Though she still made him believe she was devoted to him by coddling and petting him in and out of season with an exaggerated show of affection, her infatuation for Gus Swanson, a loutish young fellow who worked but rarely and spent much time in corner saloons, was a scandal among the gossips and goodwives of the neighborhood. Gus

was as wide a departure from the *Lothario* of tradition as one could well imagine. His faded blue eyes were almost as expressionless as the optics of a dead fish; his mouth was loose-lipped and weak; and his enormous nose, spongy and red at the tip, was set at an absurdly crooked angle on his cadaverous and stupid face. Why pretty Mrs. Williamson ever should have become infatuated with this comic-valentine cavalier was a mystery that emphasized anew the saying of Ben Hardin, an early Kentucky lawyer: "There are two things God Almighty Himself doesn't know—what a jury will do and the kind of man a woman will fall in love with." But infatuated she was, and "ran after" her scare-crow knight in a fashion quite brazen in that district of virtuous homes. She and Gus were seen often together in the evening in quiet corners of distant parks, or with heads close together over steins in suburban summer gardens. Frequently from the front windows of her flat, which overlooked the street-car line, the faithless Mrs. Williamson blew a kiss to her husband as he passed with clanging gong at the motor of his car, while Gus, on one of his back-stairs visits, stood unseen in the shadows behind her.

It was doubtless her inordinate love of finery—she dressed in a style of tawdry flashiness—as well as a desire for less risky opportunities to see her admirer, that led Mrs. Williamson from time to time to accept a position as nurse in private families. While on these nursing missions, she frequently remained away from home for extended intervals.

It was in January of a cold and stormy winter, during the second week of one of Mrs. Williamson's absences from home as a nurse, that Williamson died. When the neighbors failed to see him going and coming with his morning and evening regularity and noted the locked and silent flat, they became alarmed and broke in the door. The motorman was found asphyxiated in bed in a gas-filled sleeping room off the kitchen. Mrs. Williamson was called home. Her show of grief was pathetic.

"My poor John, my poor John!" she

wailed disconsolately, and as soon as possible put on mourning, which became her immensely, and hurried off to collect an insurance policy for \$6,000 on her husband's life.

The deputy coroner sat upon the case and with a sapience quite common among deputy coroners in large cities, decided that Williamson had committed suicide. That the motorman's death was a cunning murder carried out with Borgia subtlety never might have been found out if it had not been for Charles Williamson, the dead man's brother. When he heard of the coroner's verdict of suicide, Charles Williamson was thunder-struck. He knew what a patient, cheerful soul his brother had been all his life, and he refused to believe that so stout an optimist had taken refuge in death from life's fleeting troubles. He began a quiet investigation on his own account which revealed some surprising circumstances the coroner had overlooked.

The Williamson flat was of four rooms. It was on the second floor of a three-story building which rose from the sidewalk without an inch of intervening yard or area-way. The front room was the parlor. The room just back of it was the sitting-room, which also was used as a dining-room on state occasions, though the couple usually had eaten in the kitchen. In this room stood a large stove in which, in cold weather, a fire was kept constantly going. The kitchen was immediately in the rear. Opening off the kitchen to one side was the small bed-chamber in which Williamson had been found dead.

Charles Williamson learned that when the body was discovered, the gas jet hanging from the ceiling of the sleeping room almost over the bed on which the dead man lay, was not turned on. The door between the sitting room and the kitchen was shut, but the door between the kitchen and the bedroom was open. The four gas jets of the kitchen range were turned on. The gas jet that depended from the kitchen ceiling was turned on. From the range jet and the hanging jet in the kitchen the gas had poured in deadly flood into

Williamson's sleeping apartment. The turned-on gas jets practically precluded suicide or accident as the cause of death. It might have been an accident if the range jets had been found turned on and the hanging jet in the kitchen had been found turned off. But when both range jets and hanging jet were open, accident was out of the question. For, if Williamson had contemplated suicide he would have turned on the gas jet in his own sleeping room. He would never have depended upon the jets of an adjoining room.

Across the back of a chair close beside the stove in the sitting room was found Williamson's great fur coat, where he had hung it to dry. His shoes and overshoes sat beneath the stove. On an ornamental basket of polished nickel surmounting the stove lay his fur mittens. It was evident that he had arranged his things in this way that he might find them warm and dry next morning.

Upon the kitchen table, a clean plate flanked by cup and saucer and knife and fork suggested a plan for a hurried breakfast. In the coffee pot was freshly-ground coffee covered with water ready for the fire.

On a chair beside his pillow stood an alarm clock with its alarm set for 4:30 o'clock, his usual hour for arising. The alarm had gone off but its whirring tintinnabulation had struck upon dead ears. The dead man had been found in his night clothes, lying naturally, with the covers snuggled about him. There was no sign of struggle or agony. Evidently he had passed by a peaceful transition from sleep to death. An additional point against suicide was the fact that he had left no note.

On the other hand, the evidence that Williamson was murdered was unmistakable. Some one had stolen into the flat while the tired man slumbered and turned on the kitchen jets. The murderer had refrained from entering the bedroom even on tip-toe, for fear of awakening the sleeper.

So, to the satisfaction of Charles Williamson at least, murder was established. At his instigation, Mrs. Williamson was arrested,

For weeks, the murder trial had dragged on. Mrs. Williamson's attorney had spared no effort to make the motorman's death appear suicide or accident. But he did not deny that it might have been murder. What he did deny was that Mrs. Williamson had had a hand in it. His position on this point seemed fair to remain impregnable.

The prosecuting attorney had little difficulty in proving quite plausibly a case of murder. He showed that Mrs. Williamson might have had a motive for murdering her husband in her love for Swanson and in her desire to possess Williamson's life insurance. But for a long time it seemed he would not be able to show that she had had an opportunity for committing the crime. The chain of evidence seemed almost to fasten guilt upon her and then fail. There was a missing link.

Then almost by accident, it would seem, two vital witnesses for the prosecution were discovered. One was a barber whose shop was a few doors north of the Williamson flat and the other was a druggist whose store was a few doors south. About 9 o'clock on the night that Williamson met death, the barber had seen Mrs. Williamson pass his shop going south in the direction of her flat. Five or ten minutes later, the druggist had seen her hurrying past his windows, still going south and away from the flat. This evidence supplied the long-sought opportunity for the crime. It practically placed Mrs. Williamson, on the night of the crime, at the door of the flat building.

The prosecutor's address to the jury was considered a masterpiece. He reviewed the evidence carefully, marshaling fact after fact to prove that Williamson had been murdered and that his wife had been the murderer.

"Every murderer is prompted to his crime by some compelling motive," said the prosecutor. "Men do not lightly take the life of their fellow men. In mysterious tragedies, the French say, '*Cherchez la femme.*' I say, 'Fix the motive and nine times out of ten, you will find the murderer.'"

"Who had a motive for wishing John Williamson dead? His faithless wife loved another. John Williamson

stood in the way of her enjoyment of her lawless love. Williamson carried life insurance of \$6,000. With this money Mrs. Williamson could hold her lover in fealty and enjoy with him the pleasures that money alone can procure. It is plain that Mrs. Williamson was a person with a motive.

"But motive without opportunity would have availed her nothing. Did Mrs. Williamson have an opportunity to murder her husband? She did. The testimony of the barber and the druggist proves that. To have gone from the barber shop to the drug store, Mrs. Williamson must have been at the door of the building in which her husband was murdered. There at that door, the woman with the motive met her opportunity. The chain of evidence is thus completed. The missing link is found.

"Circumstantial evidence, you say? Yes. But it condemns this woman past hope. Who so devoid of imagination that he cannot picture this woman on that night of crime? Does she pause at the entrance to the building? Not she—her plan is formed. She trips up the stairs, noiselessly she unlocks the front door. Like a ghost she flits through the dim parlor, across the sitting room, red in the glow of the stove, on into the kitchen. On the threshold of the little bedroom she pauses. She stands there one moment as still as death, and as grim, peering into the darkness of the chamber, straining her eyes to make out the form of her husband outlined beneath the white counterpane. His regular breathing comes to her ears. Yes, he is asleep—in the deep sleep of honest toil, the man who loves her, who has given her a home, who works day in and day out for her comfort and happiness.

"For a moment she hesitates. Shall she venture into the bedroom to turn on the gas jet there? A creak of the floor, the rustle of her skirt, may wreck her plan. No, she will not risk it. Quickly she turns on the gas of the range, the gas of the hanging kitchen jet. In a little while the deadly fluid will fill not only the kitchen but the bedroom. She steps out and closes the kitchen door softly behind her. It is enough. If no accident intervenes, the

murder of her husband is as good as accomplished. She hurries from the house of brooding death; she hurries past the lighted drug-store windows, on into the night, her soul perhaps in terror at her awful crime.

"Let your eyes, men of the jury, rest for an instant upon this defendant. Note her blue eyes, her baby mouth, the pretty color that strains her cheeks. But be not deceived. It is the fashion for men to allow a woman's beauty to blind them to her true character. Too often the face of a saint hides the heart of a savage. The greatest female criminals have been fair to look upon. Lucrezia Borgia was comely. Kate Bender was as pretty as she was fiendish. The Marchioness de Brinvilliers was beautiful and like a ministering angel soothed the last moments of those who died beneath her secret poisons. Be sure that beneath the beauty of Jennie Williamson there lurks a cold, cruel, tiger nature to which murder is a trifle when her own selfish interests are in the balance.

"Try to forget that this defendant is a woman. Judge her as you would a man. Weigh the evidence without fear or favor. If you believe her guilty of this sickening murder, let no maudlin sentimental reasons stop you from passing sentence upon her. Her crime was terrible. Her punishment should fit the crime. For Jennie Williamson I ask the penalty of death."

The address of the lawyer for the defense was a weak argument, but it was a powerful invocation of the "unwritten law." He declared the prosecution had failed to prove its case, called its evidence flimsy, damned the trustworthiness of circumstantial evidence in general. But the strongest part of his address and that upon which he relied to move the jury was an appeal to the jurymen's chivalry and their tender sentiment for womanhood. He laid stress upon the defendant's beauty, her look of innocence, her helplessness in the meshes of the law.

"It is as unfair as it is untrue," he declared, "to say that a criminal spirit has no index in the countenance or that a face of innocent beauty ever can hide the soul of a fiend. The spirit speaks

through the countenance. An evil nature is written indelibly upon the physical features. The soul of a saint shines through the face of a saint. The soul of a brute is stamped on the face of a brute. Circumstances alone have entangled this woman in an unfortunate web. The prosecution asks you to send her to the gallows. I ask you to set her free."

The jury retired. The bailiff locked the door of the jury room and took his seat outside. The air of the little chamber was charged with solemnity. Each juror as he took his seat at the long table in the middle of the room seemed to feel the gravity of the situation. This was a life or death affair.

"Let us take a first ballot," said Foreman Smith from his seat at the head of the table, "to determine how we stand on the question of guilt or innocence. If we find her guilty, we can fix the punishment later. As the court has instructed us, the jury in this state has the right to name the penalty."

Pieces of white paper were distributed. On these each man wrote his vote. The ballots were collected in a hat and poured in a snowy pile in front of the foreman. He looked them through. On eleven papers was written "Guilty." On one was "Innocent."

Foreman Smith picked up the ballot inscribed "Innocent." He turned it about between thumb and forefinger curiously.

"Humph, whose vote is this?" he asked.

"Mine," said Juror Burton.

"Well, Burton, you surprise me," said the foreman. "Do you honestly think this woman did not kill her husband?"

"My honest opinion is that it has not been proved," replied Burton.

"I fully expected the first ballot would be unanimous for conviction," said the foreman. "I had an idea we should agree upon a verdict in about twenty minutes. I thought our only trouble would be in determining the punishment. I didn't think there would be any difference of opinion on the woman's guilt. I can't for the life of me see, Burton, how anyone, after lis-

tening to that evidence, can think Jennie Williamson innocent."

"Nor I," spoke up a juror.

"There's no doubt of her guilt in my mind," said a third.

"In an affair which means life or death," said Foreman Smith, "I wish to do nothing with undue haste. If I thought Mrs. Williamson innocent, I should be the last man in the world to vote to convict her. But I am absolutely convinced this woman committed this murder and it was one of the most atrocious murders I ever heard of—cold-blooded, devilish, without a single palliating circumstance. I give you credit for voting your honest conviction, Burton, but I think I can convince you you are wrong. Now, I take it for granted you don't think Williamson's death was due to accident or suicide?"

"I don't," said Burton.

"There is no doubt in your mind that it was murder?"

"None."

"Well, the prosecution's 'missing link' got Mrs. Williamson to the door of the flat in which her husband was murdered, didn't it?"

"Yes, but it didn't get her inside."

"No, but it gave her her opportunity to commit the crime."

"Nobody saw her enter the flat."

"No. But between the moment she was seen by the barber and the moment she was seen by the druggist, she had plenty of time to slip into the flat."

"Oh, I guess she had time all right. But that's not the question. The question is: did she do it? No one saw her enter the flat. No one saw her in it. No one saw her leave it."

"It is not necessary that a crime actually should be seen to fasten the guilt upon a criminal. The law says if circumstances prove him guilty 'beyond a reasonable doubt,' he is guilty. Few crimes are seen. In the very nature of things, a large part of the evidence upon which criminals are convicted in our courts is circumstantial evidence. When properly substantiated, circumstantial evidence is held by the courts to be of as much weight as direct evidence. If this were not so, three-fourths of our criminals would go free."

"But the circumstantial evidence in this case does not convince me."

"Why not?"

"The fact that Mrs. Williamson passed the door of her flat on the night of the murder does not prove that she committed the murder."

"If she was at the door of the flat, she had her opportunity. She could have committed the murder. You admit that?"

"Yes, she could have done it."

"Then it is fair to assume that she did it."

"Not by a damned sight!" Burton exploded.

"Yes, it is," insisted the foreman.

"It is fair to assume that she did it because she was the only person with both a motive and an opportunity for doing it."

Burton leaned back in his chair and looked thoughtful but remained silent.

Another ballot was taken. The result was the same as before. Eleven again voted for conviction. Burton again voted for acquittal. Foreman Smith went over the evidence with Burton once more. Other jurors joined in the argument, doing their best to convince Burton that Mrs. Williamson was guilty.

The hours dragged by as ballot after ballot was taken. Night came. The lights were lighted. Still no change. Supper was brought in. The tired jurors ate in silence. Over their cigars they began the argument again. Burton became the storm center. In the blue haze that filled the stuffy chamber, the jurors dinned their arguments into his ears, beating the air with vigorous gestures, thumping the table with their fists. Burton was obdurate.

"Say, Burton, what are you trying to do?" one juror flung at him. "Are you going to hang the jury? We want to get home. Why can't you be reasonable?"

"I'll be damned if I'll convict a woman on this evidence," said Burton doggedly.

"Would you convict a man?" asked the juror sharply.

"I don't know. That's neither here nor there. I won't vote to convict this woman."

"Well, she did it all right," said one. "Sure," sneered another.

"I'll tell you one thing," said Burton soberly. "I don't believe a woman as pretty as that, as innocent-looking as that, could have committed such a murder. She looked at me often during the trial and her eyes were as clear and innocent as a baby's. You can't make me believe that a woman with that face and those eyes could have killed her husband."

"That's no argument," snapped Foreman Smith with huge disgust. "That's sentiment."

Burton had been pacing nervously up and down the floor, his hands rammed far down in his trousers' pockets, his jaws set. He stopped suddenly and faced the others.

"Say, fellows," he said, "if Jennie Williamson was your mother—your own mother—would you vote to convict her?"

"Oh rot!" said Foreman Smith. "Cut out that sort of talk. There's no sense in dragging our mothers into this. Our mothers never would get into any such scrape."

"No, of course they wouldn't commit murder," rejoined Burton. "But any woman might become the victim of circumstances that would make innocence itself seem guilt. If Jennie Williamson was your mother," he repeated solemnly, "would you convict her? Would you? Answer me that. If you would, then I'll vote with you to send Jennie Williamson to the gallows."

It was nearly midnight. The great crowd that had packed the court room all day had gone home. Only a score or so of persons remained scattered through the seats—friends of Jennie Williamson, relatives of the dead man hoping for vengeance, others idly curious. The long wait had told on the company. Faces were drawn and tired looking. Here a woman nodded. There a fagged-out man slumbered with his head bowed over on his arm on the back of a bench. Bailiffs and court *attachés* yawned over their cigars. A

lawyer was keeping a group of reporters awake with a funny story.

A great knocking sounded on the jury-room door. The jury had agreed. The news was in the air. No one asked. No one said so. But in some mysterious way, everybody knew. The sleepers awoke. The lawyer broke off in the middle of his joke. A bailiff hurried into the judge's chambers. The judge, awakened from his nap on a divan, ascended the bench. The clerk took his position at his desk. The bailiff's gavel rapped for order. An electric hush fell upon the court room as the jurors filed into the jury-box.

Jennie Williamson was led in. Between blue-coated bailiffs she took her stand against the wall. She was dressed in black. Her *crêpe* veil was thrown back. Her face was as white as paper. Her lips were ashen, her eyes red and wild. Her mouth twitched. Her head shook with a nervous spasm. She swayed. A bailiff caught her by the arm and steadied her.

She was no longer the pretty woman of the long trial. Her beauty seemed somehow to have fallen from her like a mask. She had grown suddenly old and ugly. Fear, despair, mortal agony were in her face, but also there was guilt written unmistakably, the guilt of an abject soul, not cornered and fighting, but overwhelmed with the consciousness that now, face to face with inexorable Fate, it had no right to hope for mercy.

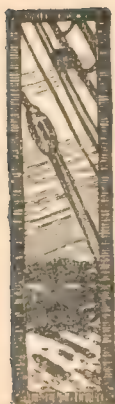
"Mr. Foreman," said the judge solemnly, "have you agreed upon a verdict?"

"We have," replied the foreman.

"The clerk will read the verdict."

The clerk took from the foreman's hand the folded piece of paper on which the verdict was written. He opened it. He smoothed the wrinkles out with great deliberation. Then in a silence as still as death, as still as the marble-white, hopeless woman with great, terror-haunted eyes, leaning against the wall, he read:

"We, the jury, find the defendant not guilty."



Mysteries of the Sea

By CULPEPER ZANDTT



THE SEVEN SEAS have known few events more remarkable than those which led to the loss of the good ship "Tuahine." How a sack of uncut diamonds came to be hidden for many years on board the vessel; how it was eventually discovered; how it came into Satterlee's possession—all this makes a tale of the finest sort. The descriptions of the strange lands and seas "east of Suez," drawn by a master hand, lend additional charm to this vivid story.

No. III—A WANDERING TREASURE SHIP

FROM my perch on the canal-parapet of the Molenvliet, I could see that Rawa Ali was doing a rushing business. His *toko* (shop) was a small one, squeezed in between that of a Chinese fruit-seller and a Madoeran curio-shop, as became a tobacconist who occasionally sold Havana leaf under the innocent Sumatra wrapper—for a price, of course—for a price. There was a little freshness in the air after sunset, though the Batavian suggestion of a Turkish bath was still to be felt, and the arc-lamps along the Molenvliet seemed to radiate more actual heat than similar ones in the temperate climates. Up and down, passing and re-passing, were *sados*, with tourists from the mail-ships, tilt-carts and Victorias with English residents from out Salemba way, trains of the little tram-cars, Malays, Javanese, Hindus, Bantamese, Nederlanders, Chinese—in black coat and *sarong*, evening clothes, white-duck, flannels—all the colors of the rainbow—all out for an airing, or intent upon the evening's engagements. For in Java, one does the bulk of his

day's work between four in the morning and noon—sleeps for three hours in the hottest part of the day—takes the air and pays calls between five and seven—and may be found at the clubs, the theatre, or the cafés along Noordwijk, from nine to midnight. Also—up to five p. m.—he or she is the most *undressed* white human appearing in public in any of the world's cities.

In the air was the tang of the Orient—that indefinable scent which is made up of a thousand smells and perfumes—burning punk, nard, cardamom, spices, peppers, yellow jasmine, humanity of all kinds—the sweet-scented and the moist—the "*mel*" from sugar-cane, roasting coffee, water buffaloes and Sumatra cheroots, etc., etc. It is a flavor which gets into one's blood—and typifies that "call of the East" which impels the conventional town-dweller on Broadway or Fifth Avenue to halt at the curb, of a warm spring morning—decide, in the turn of a second, against all that civilization has to offer—and book his passage to Yokohama, at the nearest steamship office.

And this may be the same man who—upon his *first* sojourn in Soerabaya—made ridiculous offers of various sums “for just one glimpse of Broadway.”

Up the Molenvliet, I could see the great Waringin tree in front of the *Hôtel des Indes*—a famous Batavian landmark—and, squatting under it among the *sados*, the Roemah Jonges—absorbed in their everlasting gambling, with native cards and little pieces of bamboo. Behind me, the sampans floated silently up and down the wide canal. For a moment, I thought of dropping aboard one of them, but Rawa Ali had noticed me on the parapet and came hurrying across the clean white road with a long cigar and a piece of burning punk.

“*Ini, Toean*—you try heem seegar one time—*Saja?* Heem ver goot seegar. You no savvy top-side where you catchee.”

“*Brapa doewit, Ali?*” The question of expenditure was getting to be a serious one, yet I’d no desire to hurt the feelings of the good-hearted little Bantamese. His entire family had been wiped out by the great tidal wave at Anjer, when Krakatoa blew up in Sunda Strait—and his description of that cataclysm, which destroyed over two hundred thousand people, was a dramatic masterpiece.

“No catchee this side. You catchee number one seegar—no, *kumshaw*. I likee you smoke heem.”

Seeing he would feel hurt if I offered to pay, I carefully trimmed the end from the cigar and lighted it from his stick of punk. It was the sort of tobacco one may only come by when he knows the man and the place—Ali seemed gratified by my evident appreciation of it. How the mischief he ever procured the filling of that cigar in Batavia is something neither the Nederland Government nor any white man may guess. It was said that he owned a whole Kampong near Wijnkoop Bay, which seemed likely enough in spite of his modest little *toko* on the Molenvliet. I chatted with him a few moments; then, when he trotted back to wait upon a customer, I strolled up to the bend in the canal—along the Noordwijk, with its kero-

sene-lighted *tokos* and restaurants—and over the lock-bridge into the Schoolweg, trying to figure out just where I was at.

Probably every man who has varied the profession of letters with experience as a foreign correspondent has found himself at some time “on the beach” in an alien land—with empty pockets, with no immediate prospect of the needed cable remittance. My capital, that evening, was on the shady side of twenty-five guilders (about twenty dollars, “Mex”). A second-class passage to Singapore was forty-two and a half—though I could have squatted under the for’ard deck awning for the two days, among Javanese and Malays, for about ten—eating bananas and rice, if I had them. In Saigon, I’d cabled all I thought the editors would stand—mailing the rest, with the photo’s I’d taken. Thinking native life in Java would prove acceptable to them, I had taken a chance on it, supposing a cabled remittance would be forwarded by the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank long before I was ready to leave the Island. But it had failed to materialize. Possibly the man who signed checks in New York was away on his vacation. (I’ve had that handed to me—more than once.) Possibly my stuff didn’t come up to their expectations of what I should have obtained. Possibly—pshaw! Possibly some one happened to be coming my way and, while bringing my remittance to save postage, had fallen overboard in mid-Pacific. I jingled the remaining coins in my pocket and decided the climate wasn’t adapted to mental strain over the reasons for *anything*.

My predicament wasn’t altogether as bad as it looked—or rather, as bad as it *would* have looked to the average conventional person in New York or Chicago. Rawa Ali would have staked me to food, and a more or less unsanitary “*charpoy*” in his bungalow, out back of the Chinese *kampong*, for a month or so at least—and I wouldn’t have been the first American or European to accept that sort of hospitality, either. Thinking it might be a shade cooler in the outlying *kampongs*, I kept straight on as far as Kemajoran, in the paddy fields, and then followed the

solitary road along to Soemoeroetan, where a *gamelan* was being performed for a Soendaneese contractor who lived in a Nipa bungalow on the edge of the *sawah*. Light there was none—save that given by some half-dozen torches. The weird Rembrandt-esque picture—with the typical singing and dancing of the *ronggeng*—would have stopped me even if I hadn't been tired from the five-mile tramp. There was an audience of perhaps two or three hundred, who squatted around in a semi-circle—dressed in the universal *sarong*, and little else. So when my eyes became accustomed to the deep shadows beyond the radius of torchlight, I noticed a tall, soldierly figure in white—it was the occasionally brightening glow from his cheroot that drew my glance. Presently, as white men will, in a land of the darker races, we drifted together. For half an hour, we exchanged but isolated words of comment on the *gamelan*.

"Not so bad—that."

"Proper setting for the *gamelan*—this."

"Don't get the right effect in town—under the electrics."

"Not bad looking—that girl. Fine limbs, too."

In a brief intermission, during which I accepted a cigar and he lighted a fresh one, the flare of his match caught us looking into each other's eyes with the beginnings of amazed recognition.

"I say—devilish odd, you know—you remind me of a chap I used to know in Boston. A student at Harvard, then—"

"By Jove! You're Satterlee! No—can't be possible! Damned if you *aint*, though!"

"And you're Zandtt—of Virginia! Remember my telling you, once, that your front name would have given you away without the accent? Let's see—that was about the time I gave up practicing law to manufacture candy, wasn't it? Made a fortune at it in five years, then incorporated my business, like a fool, and lost it. Three or four of you Harvard chaps used to spend Tuesday evenings in my rooms at Young's Hotel—you were taking the engineering course, I remember. What

are you doing out here—building railroads for the *Nederlanders*?"

"No—I left before completing the course. Had an offer from one of the newspapers to report a foreign war—I've been scribbling ever since."

"Hmph! We *should* be chummy, Zandtt. I'm a soldier of fortune myself. Made a pot of money at it, too—but I can't settle down and quit the game. In the blood, I suppose. What are you doing here in Batavia? There's no war on hand."

"Drifted along from Saigon in search of ethnographic material. I'd been doing Siam and the Tonking—thought the editors might use some Japanese stuff, too."

"Well? Are they going to?"

"Oh, it'll take five weeks to get the copy in their hands—can't cable anything but ordered stuff, you know. Why did you ask? *You're* not buying literary matter."

"No—I'm not. Never could see how you writer chaps work stories out. But I'll tell you what I *am* buying when I run across the right brand: companionship."

"Never knew it had a market value—to anyone but invalids. You might explain a little."

"Well, as I told you, I've more than money enough for my needs, but I've also a craving for action and excitement. I like to play the game of life in the out-of-the-way places, where things happen without much warning—with no respect for persons. I like to speculate. In fact, I've made quite a business of purchasing wrecks—libeled steamers and the like, which have been ordered for sale by the Admiralty Courts. It's something of a gamble but there's profit enough when you know ships and cargoes as well as I do. There are queer things about ships which the general public never dreams of—queer things, yes, and the spice of adventure in dealing with them. Since my experience in the candy business, I've played a lone hand. But every little while I get the sensation a man has when he sees a corking good play—he wants some appreciative friend to enjoy it *with* him. Now, I don't know how you're fixed, financially, but I'm

willing to make a side bet that you haven't made what the average man considers enough to retire on. Aside from that, you must have the love of adventure in your blood, or you'd never have thrown up your college diploma to become a war-correspondent. Coming down to cases—I'd like to have you with me a few months, and see what remunerative devilment we could scare up."

"Meaning things within the law? Or—well—otherwise?"

"Meaning anything that happens 'East of Suez—where the best is like the worst. Where there aint no ten commandments—and a man can raise a thirst.' Generally speaking, I'm no law-breaker; it's short-sighted policy. But, from Suez to Vladivostock, there's a wide interpretation of the word 'law.' I'm willing to risk my own life and fortune against the other chap's—on equal terms—any time."

"Satterlee, are you theorizing, academically, or are you making some kind of a proposition? It's of no consequence, of course, but I'll admit a grain or so of curiosity."

"Either—or both. Knock about with me for the next four months, and I'll guarantee we scare up some kind of a deal that will put money in our pockets. The understanding is that you draw upon me for any amounts you need—such amounts to be deducted from your share of the profits—and that I am to rely upon you for the interests and backing of a partner, *to the limit*, in anything we undertake. If the proposition doesn't interest you, my remarks are purely academic."

"But, hang it all—what do *I* contribute to the partnership?"

"Your time, your companionship—and the assurance of backing that I can trust. I knew you pretty well in Boston—you had that sort of a reputation *then*."

"Suppose nothing turns up in the way of profit or speculation? I'd simply be owing whatever you'd advanced."

"Not unless you're a man of pretty expensive tastes. If you give up your time, going around with me, it's worth your transportation and comfortable

living expenses, at the very least, isn't it? But you needn't concern yourself about the chance for speculation out here—it's in the air. I'm going up to Singapore to-morrow, on the *Rumphius*, to look at a four-thousand-ton boat that ripped some of her bottom-plates on a rock this side of Penang. They came down the straits with two of her compartments flooded, and the cargo damaged—just how much, it's hard to say. Anyhow, she'll be sold for ten or twelve thousand, gold—and I think there's at least ten thousand profit, at that figure, after she's been docked. How about it? Feel like taking me up?"

Would I take him up! Say—it did sound rather attractive to a man in my position, didn't it? We talked, all the way back to the Molenvliet, without realizing the pace we were hitting up until we found ourselves, drenched with perspiration, in front of the Harmonie Club—into which Satterlee took me for a brandy and soda. He seemed to be a well-known member, for the steward made no objection to cashing his draft for a thousand guilders—which he handed to me for immediate expenses. Then he went up Rijswyk to the *Hôtel der Nederlanden* and I strolled down the canal to my own stopping-place, occasionally fingering the crisp bank-notes in my pocket to assure myself that I hadn't been hitting the pipe in Rawa Ali's back room. From the experience of recent years, I can see now that my worry that night was largely indigestion. When I booked for Singapore at the Weltvrede office of the Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij—at about five in the morning—the world, and all Batavia, looked pretty good to me. I was temporarily embarked upon a hazard of new fortunes. Into what strange by-paths of the Orient they might lead me, I neither knew nor cared.

Walking along under the shady arch of the tamarind trees, I passed row after row of attractive residences, set in fragrant gardens, where the families had come out from their early coffee to enjoy the morning freshness upon the verandas, in costumes entirely suitable to the climate—the men being in-

variably in bright-colored pajamas, and the ladies in *sarongs*, with merely thin jackets above, and with grass slippers upon naked feet. It surprised and pleased me a good deal to receive smiling greetings from some of them as I passed—they had noticed me going about, and that was sufficient. When I returned to Batavia at a later day, my experiences there made a very warm impression upon my affections.

The *Rumphius* sailed from Tanjoeng Prioeck, six miles down the coast from the old town, at a quarter past three in the afternoon, when the city began to waken from its mid-day siesta—and I found Satterlee comfortably stretched in a bamboo chair outside of our room, on the starboard side. As a side-light on the man's personality, I was struck by the fact that until I consented to accompany him, he was the only passenger on board with a whole state-room to himself—a *cabin-de-luxe*, at that. And Captain Donck came out of his way, after we were clear of the long jetties, to see that he was comfortably provided for. Why? That's what puzzled me. I inferred, of course, that my friend was a pretty well known man throughout the Indies—it even seemed reasonable to suppose he was known as a wealthy man—but where, and for what potent reasons, did he get the influence he seemed to exert?

I noticed further evidence of it after dinner. We had strolled for'ard to have a look at the motley crowd of deck-passengers who had camped down as comfortably as possible for the two-day voyage—each group squatting or lying upon their own little section of deck which they had selected upon coming aboard. More than a dozen races were represented—and as far as picturesqueness went, the Siamese girls had much the advantage of their Javanese cousins. In Java, the *sarong*—wound about the waist and hanging straight down—has the appearance of a blanket skirt reaching from the armpits to the ankles. But the Siamese *panung*—an ordinary *sarong* at the start—is pulled up loosely between the knees and tucked in at the back of the waist, leaving the legs bare from the knee down. It doesn't cover the breast

entirely, as in Java, but a loose fold of gay-patterned cloth is thrown over the left shoulder, much the same as the *serape*, or *reboso*, is worn in Mexico. The effect—with the lithe, well-formed bodies of the Siamese—is graceful in the extreme.

Returning to Satterlee: I've said that he gave the impression of being a military man, chiefly from his carriage and the look of command in his face, I think. But the most attractive thing about him was his spontaneous *camaraderie*. It made no difference whether you were black, white or yellow, racially—you felt instinctively that here was a man of your own sort—one who understood you without the necessity of explaining yourself. A Malay got upon his feet—he stood six feet I should say—and amicably borrowed a light from Satterlee's cheroot. A little mother from Colombo brought her baby for him to play with in the moonlight—and the two prettiest Siamese girls, after a merry, whispered consultation, brought him a carved sandal-wood box containing a cake of opium such as one does not buy in the bazaars. He made some little present to each, next morning, as a return of the courtesies—in fact, I believe he generally traveled with such contingencies in mind.

Going back to the upper deck, aft, we found a number of fellow-travelers who had evidently settled down for the night in their steamer-chairs—which you will find altogether of cane or bamboo, in the East. Sailing back and forth across the equator, as the *Rumphius* does each voyage, there is no risk in sleeping on deck—and it is usually cooler than one's state-room. There were an English doctor, from Calcutta, two New Zealanders of Glasgow birth, a gentleman and his wife, from The Hague, and a dark-complexioned fellow whom I took for a South or Central American. These being grouped in our immediate vicinity, we fell to swapping yarns as old travelers will—and something presently started the doctor off upon a queer experience he'd had a few years before, coming from Cape Town to Wellington:

"I was on the *Tuahine*," he said.

"One of the New Zealand Shipping Comp'ny boats, you know. It just happened that I had the room with berths 'forty-eight and nine'—on the star-board side—all to myself. It was smaller than the rooms farther along the gangway, and the two bunks were against the side of the ship, the port-hole being just above the upper berth. The lower one served as a cushioned transom during the day. That arrangement isn't so bad if you happen to be on the shady side, going through the tropics, because you get plenty of air when you are sleeping—but if the water happens to be a bit lumpy, you have to close the port or be drenched every few minutes.

"In the adjoining state-room, for'ard of me and the same half-size, were a couple of men whom I supposed to be strangers when they came aboard—one being a Brazilian with a heavy black beard, and the other, a blue-eyed, rather heavy German, with a light mustache. They didn't seem to be together much during the first day or two out of Cape Town—in fact, I think we considered them rawther uncongenial room-mates, though your German usually adapts himself to conditions as he finds them. After a day or so, they appeared to be on good enough terms—like a couple who have married for worldly considerations and make the best of things because they must live together.

"Now, if there's anything I detest, it's finding myself in a position where I'm compelled to overhear a private conversation. But that night the two of them started a line of rawther personal talk after I'd turned in, and the partition was so thin—or the outside skin of the ship was such a perfect conductor of sound—that I could hear every word, distinctly. And the fact that my Portuguese was a bit rudimentary unconsciously made me try to make out the words as I shouldn't have done had they been speaking in English. I think I would have gone out on deck for a smoke but for the surprising fact of their being actually pals who had come across from Bahia together. Fellows rarely pretend to be strangers like that, you know, for any

good reason—and I began to be suspicious of them. Pretty soon, I'd a clearer idea of what they'd been up to. Knowing that diamond-mining in Brazil is more or less in Govern'm't hands, I set them down as clever thieves rather than honest miners—though, of course, I'd no proof of it. They *might* have obtained the stones honestly. At all events, they were ragging each other about a buckskin pouch of rough stones worth in the neighborhood of four hundred thousand dollars—and the Brazilian was for dividing them at once. But it seems they'd sealed it up in a canvas package and put it in the purser's safe when they came aboard—one following the other with a different package, and pretending they were strangers. And the German evidently considered his interests better protected by leaving the stones where they were.

"Presently, Mister Brazilian goes out in a huff—and Schwartz, in about five minutes, follows him. But he was back again before I dropped off to sleep, and he seemed to have borrowed some tools from the ship's carpenter, for I heard him sawing the boards of the inner sheathing after he'd pulled away the mattress of the lower berth. He wasn't at it long—there was about time, I should say, to make two cuts across the plank, one of them about six inches below the other, and pry out the section of wood with a jack-knife. Then I heard him carefully brush up the sawdust—make up his berth again, and go out—to return the saw, I suppose.

"Next day, the two seemed friendly enough—but I had the curiosity to watch the German, and thought up an excuse to follow him below into the carpenter's quarters. He was merely after eight or ten feet of copper wire, such as one uses for electric bell connections, and a screw-eye—sort of thing you screw into a door-jamb to hold a hook, you know. When I got on deck again, the Brazilian was playing 'Pedro' in the smoking-room, and I caught a glimpse of Schwartz at the door of the purser's office. Having an idea what he might be up to, I went below to my own room, and stretched myself in the berth against the side of

the ship. In about five minutes, sure enough, down comes Mister Schwartz and begins pawing at his mattress as if he'd not a minute to spare. I could hear the squeak of his jack-knife as he pried out the block of wood—and I could plainly hear his cuffs scraping against the planking as he shoved his arm through the hole. Then I heard a fumbling, scratching sound which I couldn't identify until I thought of the screw-eye. I'd an impression that he was screwing it into the planking, somewhere on the inside—in the space between the sheathing and the outside plating of the ship—but what use he made of it, I couldn't tell. Whatever he was doing, he made a quick job of it; I think he was barely ten minutes, making up the berth again and getting out.

"Well, from the way I'd pieced the affair together, I fancied he'd taken the package of diamonds from the purser's safe and hidden it somewhere, between the inner and outer skin of the ship—but of course it might have been altogether imagination; sounds are deceptive things, you know. I never saw the inside of that stateroom and there might have been features about it that would have been ample excuse for using a saw upon some of the wood-work. What happened *that night*, however, wasn't open to much doubt in my mind.

"Early in the evening, I saw the Brazilian at the door of the purser's room, and he seemed a good deal excited—controlling himself with difficulty. As Schwartz had placed the package in the purser's care, his room-mate could make no reasonable objection to his calling for it at any time, and he was shrewd enough to see that he mustn't betray his knowledge of it to the purser. But I noticed the expression of his face when he went on deck; it was *murderous*—that's the only word for it.

"About midnight, just after I'd turned in, I heard a scuffling noise on the deck over my head—then a muffled curse or two, outside my port, and a splash in the water alongside. For an instant, I was on the point of sticking my head out and shouting 'Man overboard!' Then I thought how ridiculous

I'd look if it happened to be nothing but a tarpaulin or a deck-chair, after all. The mate was on the bridge; the stewards were still about; it seemed foolish to suppose anything could have happened without their knowing something of it. So I turned over and tried to sleep, but it was a long time before I could do so, or shake off the creeping sensation that murder was in the very air I breathed. Next morning, Schwartz failed to show up at breakfast. The Brazilian said he'd no idea where he was—and didn't seem to have much of an appetite. Two days later, the captain had a quiet search made, but no trace of Schwartz could be found and an entry was made in the log that he had fallen overboard during the night. Several times after that, when I happened to be in my room, I could hear the Brazilian going through steamer-trunks, portmanteaus, clothing—searching, cursing softly, like a man demented—and searching again. But as far as I could judge, he never found what he was looking for—and went ashore at Hobart, Tasmania, looking as if he were upon the verge of suicide from melancholia."

As the Doctor finished, we realized that we'd been keyed up to a tense pitch of interest—most of us were sweating profusely.

"Why didn't you denounce the man, doctor—and have him tried for murdering Schwartz?"

"What proof had I? Suppose I told what I'd overheard in my room? I'd have had to admit that I didn't speak Portuguese fluently, and it would have sounded like ninety per cent imagination. Suppose there had been no package in the purser's safe? That would have disposed of the whole story, wouldn't it? I was on the point of denouncing the fellow more than once, but I really hadn't enough to go upon."

"You stayed on the boat until she reached Wellington, didn't you? Why didn't you search that stateroom, yourself, after the chap left at Hobart?"

"If, with all the motive *he* had, it was impossible for him to discover anything in that room, what chance had *I*?"

"Why, *you* would naturally have

looked for that hole in the sheathing and felt around back of it. But, knowing nothing of its existence, he might have overlooked it easily enough—especially, if the cracks had been filled with bread-crumbs.”

“Well, that’s possible, I suppose, but I had no chance as it happened. The room was occupied by a clergyman and his wife, who came aboard at Hobart.”

I’d been paying no attention to Silverha, the South American passenger in our little group, until Satterlee gently nudged my elbow. The man’s eyes were glistening, even in the semi-darkness under the awning—he’d been fidgeting with his hands and feet all the time the Doctor had been speaking, but I laid it to excessive cigarette smoking. Several times, he seemed upon the point of interrupting with a question—but didn’t. As Satterlee touched me, however, the man spoke.

“Ze sheep, *Señhor*—vat you say hees name was?”

“The *Tuahine*, of the New Zealand Shipping Comp’ny.”

“And he ees still running on ze Line? *Si?*”

“Oh, bless you, no! Broken up—some time ago!”

“Ah! You have ze positeef informations? *Si?*”

“Why, practically so. I ran across one of the Comp’ny’s folders, yesterday, and looked over the Fleet list to see what boats were running, now. There’s a *Tuahine*, right enough, but she’s a twin-screw, ’leven-thousand-ton boat—just built. They’d hardly give her the same name, you know, if the old boat were still in existence. That’s very rarely done.”

“I suppose she might have been wrecked—or burned at sea?”—This, from one of the Auckland men.

“Not without a good deal of newspaper comment—she was a six-thousand-ton boat, and very well known, at that.”

“Where ees it that they do brek heem up, as you say?”

“Oh, there are comp’nies who make a business of shipbreaking in most every large port—but those at Genoa, Osaka, Bridgeness and Falmouth seem to get most of the big ships. I fawncy

Osaka is about the largest ship-graveyard in the Orient.”

“Suppose those diamond remain in heem when he is brek up? Would those peoples in Osaka, or Genova, find ze stones?”

“My word! That hadn’t occurred to me, you know. It’s not by any means certain they would! The stones might lodge somewhere against the skin of the ship—and drop into the water when the outside plates were ripped off. On the other hand, they might easily have been discovered by the men who ripped out the cabin fittings. Pardon me, *Mister Silverha*—have we ever met before? I don’t seem to remember your face, but there’s an occasional tone in your voice which sounds quite familiar.”

“Eet is quite possible, *Señhor Medico*—I am mooch in *Paris y Londres* to sell my *sucre y café*. But I theenk I shall remember, eef we had met.”

“Oh, it’s merely one of those tone-resemblances which often fool us. Are you out here on business, sir? Rawther like bringin’ coals to Newcastle, I should say.”

“The *Señhor Medico* makes the good joke—I should not sell mooch of my coffee in Java. But I theenk of raising ze pepper on my own plantations—in Java, I see heem cultivate. Also, I go from Singapore to see my relative in ze Filipinas.”

I’d missed nothing of the conversation up to that time—but Satterlee appeared to have gone to sleep in his chair. I believe the bar is open all night on the Koninklijke boats—anyhow, the soft-footed Malay deck-stewards appeared to be coming along with cooling drinks at all hours. There’s a touch of Oriental picturesqueness about the Lascar crews and Malay deck-boys on the Eastern steamers which is very attractive—and I was feeling thoroughly contented with life. The air was soft, with just enough freshness to make one sleepy—and the wake of the moon across the smooth Java Sea was the prettiest thing imaginable. I must have dropped off, myself, about that time—to dream of diamonds and Burmese rubies until I had Monte Cristo looking like an “old-clo’” man—for my

next conscious impression was hearing seven bells, and seeing the first streaks of dawn in the east. At half-past four, we tubbed and had our coffee—after which, I noticed Satterlee coming down from the Captain's room in pajamas, with a large bundle under his arm. Family bibles, one would have said, from the shape. Noticing my expression, he placed a finger upon his lips and called me into our room.

"What the devil have you got there, old chap? This is no temperature for head-work!" He unwrapped a fat Lloyd's "Shipping Register," and its supplement.

"Sh—h—h! Forget it. Forget you saw me with it at all. Don't look under the berth for it when you come in."

"All right—but why? Where did you get it?" I was myself whispering—unconsciously.

"Borrowed it from Captain Donck until everyone goes ashore Monday morning. Why? Just so that Silverha will have no chance to consult it, if the idea happens to occur to him. It probably won't, because a landsman, having little experience with shipping affairs, doesn't understand what there is to be found in that book, and wouldn't know how to look for it if he did. But I thought I'd get the Register out of his reach on general principles."

"What have you got against Silverha?"

"Not a solitary thing that I know of! Not a thing! Just had a hunch—may be nothing in it. I say, old chap—you don't mind humoring me a bit, do you? Well, suppose we don't discuss the Doctor's yarn, or Silverha, with anyone—not even between ourselves—until after we get off this ship—eh?"

Satterlee had impressed me as a man who never did anything without an object, and the more I saw of him, the more respect I had for his judgment upon any matter in which he chose to interest himself. So I humored his whim. We avoided the subject, even at the risk of appearing somewhat lacking in good-fellowship, for we were about the only persons in the saloon who didn't talk about the Doctor's story all day Sunday, or offer conjectures as to what, of a hundred things,

might have happened if he'd acted differently.

Monday forenoon, the *Rumphius* landed us upon the long wharf at Tanjong Pagar—a mile and a half west of the central district in Singapore—and though Satterlee was a member of the club on the "Bund," he chose the good old Raffles Hotel instead. I could see that he'd something on his mind which had no connection with the tramp steamer he'd come up to purchase—but I got no hint as to what it might be. Some of our fellow-passengers on the *Rumphius* were quite persistent in their attempts to secure us for a day of sight-seeing—another evidence of the man's popularity—but Satterlee excused himself upon the plea of urgent business matters. Immediately after tiffin, he dragged me off to the shipping-office of Ellerslie Brothers—where he spent an hour going through a lot of dusty old file-cases—and then to that of Barlow & Company, whom I knew to be Agents for several of the steamship lines touching at Singapore.

At Ellerslies I amused myself by smoking in one of the big shaded windows overlooking the Bund, while he was busy with his friend Tom—but at Barlow's, I accompanied him into the counting-room and was amazed to see him apparently booking a passage for us, somewhere. Noticing my look of amazement, he said—rather hastily:

"You don't mind a room on the star-board side, do you, old chap? We'll not get the sun much after one o'clock, you know, and it's the coolest side at night, during the no'th-east monsoon. It's really the only decent room left."

The hint was sufficient. I nodded—and kept my mouth shut. Where I was going, I'd not the faintest idea—nor what new developments had occurred in regard to the steamer he came up to purchase. But I was paddling in Satterlee's boat, and willing to leave the initiative to him. It was not until our luggage was packed on one of the little box-like *gharis* and we were on our way back to Tanjong Pagar that I'd any idea as to our destination. As we left the Raffles, I heard him tell his *rickshaw-wallahs* "Manila steamer—juldee jao!"

As we rolled out upon the long wharf, I saw the blue flag with the white disc—of the *Compania Filipinas*—flying at the mast-head of a six-thousand-ton boat which looked more English than Spanish to me, by her rig and build. Yet the copper letters on her bow spelled "*Antonio Garcia*." She was a larger boat than I remembered seeing in that Company's service. And as we followed the room steward below with our luggage, her cabin arrangements struck me as being English. Our room proved to be number nine—a spacious one, with berths twenty-four, five and six—twenty-six being the transom-berth under the port-hole. As the passenger accommodation was amidships, the saloon had but sixty-four berths, all told—and as some of the Manila planters had taken entire staterooms for their ladies, there were less than twenty in the first class from Singapore to Manila. In the second class, I believe there were not over a dozen.

Satterlee knew it was advisable to explain his plans at the earliest possible moment in order to be sure of my coöperation. But he first made a point of ascertaining that the large stateroom at the other side of our partition was taken by the *Señorita de Garmenda* and her duenna, neither of whom understood a word of English—while the smaller rooms across our little alley—numbers ten and eleven—were occupied by two young girls and their maid— orphaned nieces of Don Amadeus de Meztozo, one of the ex-*Gobernadores* in Mindanao. They also understood no English—and Satterlee chuckled with satisfaction when he'd assured himself of this.

Locking the door of our room, he opened a parcel which he'd obtained at Ellerslie's on the way to the ship, and fished out a second-hand copy of Lloyd's Register for that year, with its supplementary volume. Then he lighted a cigar—pushed the box across to me—and took from his pocket two steamship cabin-diagrams—one of them rather old and worn.

"See that cabin-plan, old chap? That's a piece of unexpected good luck. It's the old *Tuahine*, of the New Zealand Shipping Comp'ny, as you'll notice—"

"The *Tuahine*! The devil it is! Why, that's the—"

"Exactly! The ship the Doctor was on, from Cape Town to Wellington. I knew the New Zealand people had no agents in Singapore, but I happened to remember that Tom Ellerslie graduated as a Naval Engineer, and used to collect all the cabin diagrams he could get hold of. It was just a chance shot in the dark—I didn't even know whether he was back in London or not—but it proved a bull's-eye. I'd have cheerfully given ten pounds for this plan, but he had duplicates, and this one is slightly damaged, as you see."

"Hmph! I'll take your word for the luck in getting it—but I'll be hanged if I see why you want to know the cabin lay-out of a ship no longer in existence—broken up, long ago!"

"If she *were* broken up, Culp', I shouldn't take much interest in her—that's a fact."

"What the devil do you mean by that! Not broken up! You're not hinting that—?" My pulse was beginning to jump, and I was feeling rather breathless, though I couldn't as yet make the chaotic suggestions in my head assume definite shape.

"I'm not *hinting anything*. When the Doc' was telling his story and mentioned that ship, I'd a dim recollection of her being, *not* broken up, but *sold* to Kishimoto, of Osaka. Of course he'd naturally change her name, and give her new papers—so there'd be nothing to prevent the New Zealand people from giving their *new* boat the *old* name. Why, man, there are five thousand bully old boats, greyhounds of the last generations, crossing the seven seas to-day under twenty thousand aliases! To those who knew them in all the pride of their maiden trips—in the days of the popularity they so justly won, they are now but memories—ghosts of the good old ships that *were*. But I've more than once patted the stem or side-plates of some old boat lying at the New York, or Liverpool, or Cape Town wharves, and imagined the look of hurt pride in her hawse-pipes when some former passenger hurried along the pier without even a nod of recognition. Remember

the fine old Shaw-Savill boat, *Arawa*, that used to go around the world each voyage? Who but a sea-faring man would ever recognize her now as the Elder-Dempster, West Indian Liner, *Port Henderson*? Remember the Nord-deutscher Lloyd crack, the *Saale*, that was partly burned in the Hoboken fire? She's now a cargo-boat, running from New York to 'Frisco, through the Magellan—the *J. L. Luckenbach*.

"Well—I was almost positive the old *Tuahine* was still afloat. I *thought* she might be running out of Osaka—in which case, we stood a fair chance of locating her somewhere in the East Indies before long. So I borrowed Cap'n Donck's 'Register' in case the same idea might occur to one of those other passengers. When I had a chance to look the boat up, in our room, I got a jolt that made me laugh—you'll get it yourself, presently. Going into the library of the *Rumphius*, I found a sailing-list of this Comp'ny, in the rack, there. And I don't believe I've given a thought to that stranded tramp in Singapore, since."

"Oh say, look here, Satterlee—you don't believe for a minute there's anything in that yarn of the Doctor's?"

"I certainly *do*! Consider, old chap: he's a student, a man of science, with the habit of working along exact lines—of making conservative statements. I saw he was thoroughly convinced that the facts of that affair between Schwartz and the Brazilian were about as he'd framed them up. *And the manner of our fellow-passenger, Senhor José Sebastiao Carlos Silverha, as he listened to the story, was all the corroboration I needed.* He was learning, for the first time, the real explanation of that mystery which occurred several years ago. And—being now a wealthy planter, as it seems—he'll find the *Tuahine*, if she's still afloat, even if he spends two or three years at it."

"Why? Half a dozen of the other passengers might do the same thing if they had the time to spend in hunting a willow-o'-the-wisp. Why should *he* do it, any more than the rest?"

"Because he is the Doctor's Brazilian—Schwartz's partner—with his beard shaved off."

"The devil! What proof have you of that?"

"None at all. No proof but his manner and facial expression that evening. But I'll bet the best dinner you care to order at the 'Oriente,' when we get to Manila, that I'm right."

"Well, but—look here, man—why, say, this was the only ship for Manila! *He's probably sailing with us, now!*"

"Correct, Sherlock—go up head. To be accurate, he is now occupying room nineteen, on the port side. *And if the idea occurs to him to look through the Captain's Lloyd's, he'll do his damndest to beat us to those diamonds before we reach Manila!* But I don't imagine he suspects we're after them."

"But, hang it all, Satterlee, how can he! These boats make no stops, *en route*, do they?"

"Just glance over this other cabin diagram, will you. It's the plan of *this ship*—the *Antonio Garcia*—got it from Barlow & Comp'ny when I booked our passages, this morning—they marked our room, here, with a blue cross. Now by comparing the two plans, you'll notice the cabin arrangement is rather similar to the *Tuahine's*. Well—open that Lloyd's Register and look up the *Antonio Garcia*."

I hadn't grasped the thing, yet. The plans looked much alike—but so do hundreds of steamer plans. Turning to the name in the Register, I read: "*Antonio Garcia*—ex '*Port Mandarin*'—ex '*Salonikan Prince*'—ex '*Saki Maru*'—ex '*Tuahine*,' 6000 Gross—Stl. Scr. Brig—100 A 1—Denny & Bros., Dumbarton—1891—Comp. Filipinas, Barcelona—Spanish Flag—special survey at Cardiff, Nov. 1906—Quad. Exp. 4 Cyl—430 X 50 X 31-6"—etc.

"Then, this is actually—?" I couldn't find words to express the absurd impossibility of the thing. That we should hear the Doctor's yarn only forty-eight hours before, and come upon the identical ship—waiting for us in Singapore harbor—was so far beyond the bounds of probability that it gave me an uncanny sensation. I began to wonder if, after all, the Oriental hasn't something more than abstract theory for his belief in "Kismet." "Oh it's too blooming ridiculous, old chap!" I said.

"Well—why? There's nothing impossible or even improbable in our stumbling upon any ship afloat, at any moment. Suppose she were a trans-Atlantic Liner, two months ago? That proves nothing. She might have been chartered or sold the day after we last heard of her, and refitted for the Oriental trade. Some years ago, I left the original *Kaiser Wilhelm II* of the Norddeutscher Lloyd in Sydney harbor when I sailed for 'Frisco. I crossed the Pacific, remained two weeks on the coast, and was in New York seven weeks from the time I left Sydney. And the *next day*, the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* came into New York harbor, after having been to Bremen, via Suez. She afterward became the *Hohenzollern*. I located this boat on that folder of the *Compania Filipinas* within seven hours from the time I heard the Doctor's story—and *saw she was timed to sail from Singapore, to-day.*"

"Then I s'pose you've located the rooms which the Doctor and those other chaps had—on the plan of the old *Tuahine*?"

"Yes—I have. But without that older plan, I should have been considerably mixed up—just as Silverha will, if he tries it from the *Compania Filipinas*' plan."

"Why so? For the love of Mike, *why*?"

"Because, in the first place, all the numbers have been changed. The Doctor's room had in it berths 'forty-eight and nine'—those in Schwartz's room were 'fifty-two and three.' As the ship is arranged to-day, each stateroom has a number—and the berths, an entirely different system of numbering. The room corresponding in position to that occupied by Schwartz now has in it berths 'twenty-seven and eight.'"

"What are the numbers in the Doctor's old room?"

"It no longer exists as a passenger stateroom. That and the inside room adjoining were knocked into one to make an office-cabin for the engineer. And that's where Silverha's going to get fooled if he learns the ship's identity. He'll be looking for a *group of four small rooms at the after end of this starboard gangway*. And he'll find but

two—both of them occupied by young girls. Having the reverence for Spanish and Portuguese etiquette born in him, he will no more dare enter one of those rooms than he would the Sultan's harem, in Sulu."

"Hmph! You're right upon *that* point, anyhow. Might explain how *we* are going to get a look at them! Why, I say—as I remember the story, that room of the partners must be the one directly opposite our door, here, across the alley—because the Chief Engineer's room is just on the other side!"

"Precisely. That's the room. I've paid our passage to Manila—gone several weeks out of our way and dropped everything else on the mere chance that a sixteen gauge copper wire has stood the wear and tear of five or six years at sea without parting. And, at this moment, I have no idea how we're to get into that room for half an hour without being caught and shoved into the lazareet as common thieves—or worse. Pretty long shot for a speculation, isn't it? Well—I think so, myself. But all the same, I frequently take that kind and win out on them. Now you hunt up Silverha—and cultivate him. Tell him we found cables at Singapore which changed our plans and sent us on to Manila—that we're pleased to be traveling with him, and all that. Don't let him get on to it, but keep your eyes open if he gets intimate with any of the officers. In the mean while, I'll get solid with the Chief Engineer."

From the time I had run short of money in Batavia, my thinking machinery had been switched out of its normal groove. Things had happened so rapidly that I couldn't seem to get my ordinary sense of proportion. I felt again as if I'd had a pipe in Rawa Ali's little back room. The assumption that we had one chance in a million of finding that package of diamonds seemed preposterous—which showed where my temperament differed from Satterlee's. With him, the word "impossible" had a purely academic meaning. He took chances that made the onlooker's hair stand on end—apparently without a thought—and things he wanted to happen usually did happen. Take the mat-

ter of getting into the *Señorita* Meztozo's room, for example—that would have stumped me at the start. Even if I'd scared up the nerve to go in, I should have been caught red-handed. But Satterlee worked it out in a way no one else would have thought of—basing his plan upon Spanish superstition and belief in haunted rooms.

In the first place, he won the instant liking of the Chief Engineer. How? Don't ask *me*! I didn't even know he talked Spanish with the fluency of a *Castillano*—or that he could tell stories with the real Spanish "nub" to them. Anyhow, before six bells that evening, they were emptying bottle after bottle of Andalusian wine together in the Chief's room—and when that well-balanced officer was called below for an hour, he insisted upon Satterlee's remaining in the room until he returned. Which was exactly what my friend had played for. The moment he had the room to himself, he doused the light—dived under the transom at the end of the Chief's desk—drew from inside his shirt a half-inch auger-gimlet and two feet of rubber tubing with a funnel at one end—then bored a hole through the partition into the next room, about three inches above the deck-planking. Inserting the tubing, he repeated a few Spanish words through it, in a blood-curdling tone alternated with gasps and groans—as if a person was gurgling his life out while being stabbed and choked to death. He repeated this a few times, but was careful not to overdo it. Next morning, both the *Señoritas* Meztozo and their maid came out to the saloon in spite of their sea-sickness—looking as if they'd had a pretty bad night.

Satterlee exerted himself to be entertaining. He won the liking of their uncle and, through him, of the girls themselves. He was most attentive all day—so, their making a confidant of him in the afternoon came about quite naturally. They told him their room was haunted by the ghost of a man who had been murdered in it—oh, there was no question about it! Had they not heard the man gasping his life out—heard his blood splashing upon the deck, and then the awful dripping of it—drip—drip—

drip—so! (Satterlee did this for me, afterwards, and the imitation was horribly perfect.)

Well—it all came around so naturally that I was half fooled by it myself. And no one was louder in his approval of the courtesy than Silverha when my friend offered to exchange our room for that of the ladies. At first, they wouldn't consider it. But he insisted that our larger room was more comfortable—more suitable for ladies—and laughed at the idea of ghosts. Ghosts keep *him* awake? Nonsense! They never had, yet! No, no—the *Señoritas* need have no uneasiness upon *that* score. It was the audacity of his challenge to the ghosts that did it. The *Señor* was not afraid? Very well, then, he should try the room. In the morning, one would see how he appeared. And the joke of it was, that—sharing the discomfort of the smaller room with him, as a matter of courtesy to the *Señoritas*—I found myself one of the most popular men on the ship.

Once locked in our new quarters, with a reasonable certainty of being uninterrupted during the afternoon siesta, we took no chances upon waiting for a better opportunity. We hauled out the bedding of that lower berth in short order and began to examine every inch of the sheathing with a pocket electric. In a moment, we came upon two scarcely perceptible furrows across the paint of one plank—about five inches apart. The room had been evidently repainted half a dozen times, but there was the dim outline of a plug where the original auger-hole had been.

It took us not over ten minutes to remove that square of plank—then Satterlee shoved his arm through, and began cautiously feeling around to the right. I could see by his face that he'd discovered nothing, and I suppose I must have looked rather disheartened, for he whispered:

"Don't give up until after I've located that screw-eye—*that'll* be there, *yet*. If we find nothing else, I'll get into the 'tween-decks under this. Never say die. Eh? Wait a bit!"

He'd shoved in his right arm, this time, and was reaching far to the left of the hole. I knew by his tense ex-

pression that he'd touched something. Then—inch by inch—he withdrew his arm—paying out some unseen object with his fingers, as it came. When his hand appeared, I saw that he had a blackened copper wire in it, and that a weight of some kind was evidently attached to the lower end. Inch by inch, he pulled that wire through the hole until he could firmly grasp a package, caked with dust and grime. Laying it carefully in the wash-basin, he poked the wire back—closing the aperture with painstaking care. Then we replaced the bedding and removed all traces of our job.

I think Silverha had his first suspicion of us that evening—after learning from the Captain what ship he was actually on. By that time, we had divided the diamonds and stowed them about our waists in money-belts which Satterlee had thought to procure in Singapore. And the chance of our finding them at all had depended for nearly six years upon the fact that the buckskin pouch was resting in a niche formed by the top of a transverse deck-beam—leaving the wire slack! Had it hung down straight—shifting with each motion of the ship—the wire must have worn through in half that time, dropping the stones to the Lord knows where.

Next morning we noticed Silverha loitering in the starboard gangway, looking at the state-room doors in each alley as he passed them. There had been a number of minor changes made by the different owners through whose hands the ship had passed, changes immaterial to anyone familiar with marine architecture, but which impressed the Brazilian with a feeling of strangeness. Different paint and saloon decorations had something to do with it. Beyond the fact that she had been called the *Tuahine*, I doubt if he obtained much from the captain in the way of corroborative detail. At all events, the elimination of those two smaller rooms at the after end of the gangway fooled him—and he evidently assumed that four of them had been converted into a couple of the large ones, the room he'd formerly occupied

being on the third alley down from the saloon. As this was occupied by the *Señorita De Garmenda*, he saw no chance of examining it from the inside—and turned his attention to the 'tween-deck space, in which the galley and store-rooms were located. Under them were coal-bunkers, on each side.

The ship had been recently equipped with wireless—but there had been little business with the passengers, coming out, and the operator had stayed half an hour too long at the "Raffles," in Singapore—the steamer sailing without him. Satterlee had expressed considerable dissatisfaction over this, for some reason—so I wasn't surprised when he obtained the Captain's permission to use the instruments. Hearing the "spark," I went up to the operating room to ask whom he was in communication with. He slipped off the head-frame when I came in, and closed the door.

"There are some things I don't like aboard this old hooker, Culp. In the first place, Silverha appears to have figured out what boat she is—and he'll keep rooting around until he discovers more. He's a bit suspicious of us, now. Aside from that, the glass has been dropping for the last hour—not suddenly enough for an imminent typhoon, but in a way that indicates nasty weather before morning. I'd much prefer an English captain on the bridge and a Scotch engineer below when things begin to happen—this breed has a way of losing its head in emergencies. So, I've been trying to see whom we may count upon for assistance, if we need it. The 'P. & O' *Salsette* is about a hundred miles no'th-east of us—and the 'Messageries' *Polynesian* is just poking her nose out of Saigon now. There's a '*Navigazione Generale*' boat a little nearer—and one of Rajah Brooke's supply-boats, over near Sarawak. I've been talking with all of them; the Italian Liner is the only one whose glass is doing anything, so the weather is coming from about straight west of us, I should say."

The events of the next twelve hours were chaotic. First, there was an alarm of fire, about four bells in the after-

noon. Silverha had been prowling about in the 'tween-deck store-rooms with a lighted candle—and had carelessly dropped a match in a bunch of oily cotton waste. He was obliged to run for it, or be roasted. In less than half an hour, the 'tween-deck space and bunkers were a mass of roaring flame: the crew were fighting like maddened animals for the boats, knifing women and children in a frenzy of terror. Through all the confusion, I've a distinct recollection of Satterlee, coatless and colorless, coolly smoking a cigar in the Wireless room, as he talked with the Sarawak boat and explained our predicament. I asked him if there was any use attempting to save luggage. He thought a moment—looking out of the window to see in which direction the smoke and flames were blowing:

"We'll need our shaving things and clean linen. Hate to lose those cigars of Rawa Ali's, too. Hm—m—m—you can just about make it, if you go down the after companion. Grab the port-manteaus—they'll be all we can handle—and get back here as quick as the Lord'll let you!"

When I returned, he leisurely filled his pipe and climbed aft with me on the turtle-deck. There was a life-raft—but as it happened we remained aboard until the Sarawak boat took us off, six hours later. The fire had worked forward, away from us, and burned more slowly as it ate into the cargo. We searched for the boats which had managed to get away, but not a vestige of them could be found, and the glass was falling so rapidly that the captain finally started for Sarawak as fast as his turbines would shove him. We got the edge of the typhoon, and were nearly swamped, as it was—but finally reached Borneo in safety, *under assumed names*. Satterlee had booked us that way in Singapore, for reasons of his own—and none of our acquaintances, up to the time this narrative appeared in print, ever knew that we were passengers on the ill-fated *Antonio Garcia*—that wandering treasure-ship of many names.

In a previous narrative of Satterlee's adventures, I mentioned the fact of his once befriending me when I was up against it. This is the story.

The Land of Disillusion

By J. B. HAMPTON

IF HAD all ended most beautifully. Right, quite as it should in these days of happy endings, had triumphed over wrong; virtue, which is its own reward, had come unscathed through the two hundred odd rather gory pages; *Stanwood Stillings*, his plotting enemies either dead or in abeyance—the former for preference—had been thoroughly if hazily vindicated; *Helene Hillers*, that wondrous maiden the like of whom never trod this disappointing earth, had fallen into *Stanwood's* arms, pressed her red lips—so red were all the de-

scriptions of them that a sophisticated reader would have suspected Dorin's No. 18 rouge—to his, proclaimed him her hero and her love-for evermore, and quite unnecessarily swooned. And William Redmond Parnell O'Brien had been carried quite five blocks beyond the street where he should have alighted from the car.

He came out of his trance with a guilty start, stuffed the doubled pages of "*Stanwood Stillings' Triumph*" hurriedly into his hip pocket, grabbed up the small but rather heavy parcel with

which, as A. D. T. Number Three Hundred and Seventy-something, he had been entrusted, made a panicky bolt for the back platform of the suburban car, and without waiting for it to come to a stop in response to the bell, swung himself down to the slush of the grimy suburban street.

"Colton Street five blocks back! Gee, but I'm the dinky little dope, aint I, ridin' clean past it like this?" mused young Mr. O'Brien uneasily. "And that red-headed gink back there at a hundred and sixty-three Battery St., wot give me this call, plunkin' me out a half-dollar tip and tellin' me to git this bundle out here by ten, sure!"

A glance at a clock in a little jeweler's shop told him it was already ten minutes before the hour. To land at 28 Colton St. by ten meant a burst of unusual and quite disgusting speed. O'Brien tucked the bundle under his arm, got onto his toes and did a sprint, while the soft yellow slush flew right and left beneath his scurrying over-shoes.

Down the street he sped, turned into Colton St., spied number 28, an unimposing wooden apartment house, quite uniform with all the other forlorn wooden apartment houses with which Colton St. was lined on either side, mounted the steps to the not overclean vestibule just as the clock on a neighboring spire was booming out a sonorous "ten" and pressed his pudgy thumb on the button just above the letter-box of "Suite 5."

"Hello!" came a feminine voice, as he stood with one of his outstanding ears glued to the speaking-tube.

"Say, Mr. Connors up there?" he called into the tube. "This is a messenger wit' a package for him."

For answer the latch of the inner door of the vestibule began to click invitingly. William Redmond Parnell O'Brien pushed it open, stumbled up four flights of badly-lighted stairs and beheld at the top of the last flight—*Helene Hillers*, golden hair, red lips and all, smiling at him from the threshold of the open door of the flat.

Helene Hillers was fully as engaging in the flesh as she had been in the pages now stuffed into the hip pocket of

Mr. O'Brien's trousers. Indeed, rather more so. Her voice was properly soft and musical; her eyes looked at one just as tenderly as *Helene Hillers'* eyes had looked in the text; her figure was just as slim and just as trim in its tailored suit.

"A package for Mr. Connors, dearie?" said she. "I'll take it."

"Guess again," said William Redmond, shortly. "The gink wot give it to me said as how I was to give it into the hands of this Connors party personal—see?"

"Oh, all right," she laughed. "Come in, sweetheart, and give it to him 'personal' if those are your orders."

She led him into the bare, carpetless hall and thence to the equally bare front room of the apartment. There were no rugs on the floor, no furniture in sight. Several large packing-cases, duly nailed up and marked, were in the center of the excelsior-littered floor. The gaping windows were guiltless of any draperies.

As he stepped into the room, William Redmond Parnell etc. got the second acute shock he had suffered that morning; for there, perched on one of the packing-cases, nonchalantly smoking a cigarette and frowning hard at the ceiling while he dangled a pair of thin legs against the packing-case's side, sat the double of *Stanwood Stillings*—at least, so it seemed at the moment to A. D. T. Three Hundred and Seventy-something.

Adorning the gentleman on the packing-case were the same thick, brown hair, the same thin lips, the same cold eyes and long, sharp nose, with which the creator of *Stanwood Stillings*, who fashioned all his rather doubtful heroes to the munificent tune of three cents per agate line, had endowed that most engaging gentleman.

Young Mr. O'Brien gasped. To be thrown thus suddenly into the very presence of the hero and heroine of the immortal piece of literature which had made him go five blocks past his street but a few moments since, was something as thoroughly thrilling as it was unlooked-for. Here, at his very fingertips, thrust upon him without so much as the asking, was romance in real life; for it took but one understanding glance

at the man on the packing-case, and the wonderful girl who had let him in, to realize that they were the sort of people who would do and dare and fight and suffer, even as *Stanwood Stillings* and *Helene Hillers* had done and dared and fought and endured.

"Here's the boy with the package Red sent, Con," said the girl.

Instantly the man became all attention. He slid from his perch, fairly snatched the package from the boy's hands, tore off the wrapping, and, whipping into his eye a little microscope he had drawn from his vest pocket, he stepped to the window and began examining the contents of the parcel—which O'Brien could see was some sort of an engraver's "cut."

"Say, this is bully, Fan—bully!" the man at the window exclaimed. "He's fixed the '2' in that '20' to the life. Gee, they wont have so much as an inklin' that these aint the real goods when we get 'em out. Cuttin' the time pretty thin, though, not gettin' it here till ten. Hike round now. We gotter get that ten twenty-seven train.

"Hey, boy, hang round here for a bit. Here's a dollar for you. I'll want you to poke out and get a taxi in a minute. Now, Fan, throw the things together and let's get outer here. Strain's over now and there aint nothin' to do but pull our freight. Hang it all! Where's that package of cigarettes?"

Perched inconspicuously on the window-sill, William Redmond watched him with the eye of a connoisseur. That was surely *Stanwood Stillings'* voice; those swift movements, that jerky movement of the head as he spoke were also the redoubtable Stillings'. Moreover, the man's words, as they drifted out from the room beyond, whither the two had repaired, brought a glow to the listening William's eyes.

"We aint hikin' none too soon. There was one or two moves yesterday I didn't like none too well. Nope, I didn't say anythin' for there wa'n't no good of worryin' you. But just the same I'm glad we've got it and that we're leavin'. Be ready in ten minutes, can yer? All right. I'll chase the kid out to bring round the taxi. We can just about make that train."

He came into the bare front room again, and just as he had opened his mouth to speak, the thing happened.

The hall door, which was locked, suddenly burst inwards with a great cracking of splintering wood and riven panels. Into the room came three men, two in ordinary clothes and one in uniform.

It all happened so suddenly that William O'Brien had not even time to gasp in excitement; the man who looked like *Stanwood Stillings* stood quite still, his mouth hanging open foolishly and the color slowly receding from his face, leaving it a sickly, pasty white, as he looked at the newcomers.

One of the men in ordinary clothes jumped to his side and, catching him by the wrist, ran a hand quickly over all the pockets for any suspicious bulge.

"No gun on him. Go through the place and nab the woman, Jim," he said to the man in uniform. "She's here. She come in not ten minutes ago."

The patrolman stepped into the room beyond; there was a little half-smothered scream; then he came back, leading the young woman by the arm and carrying the engraver's cut in his other hand.

"Found this, too, John," he said laconically, passing it to the man who had given him the orders.

"H'm!" said the latter with a grin. "Got yer with the goods on, eh, Con?" he asked of his captive.

The latter grinned in sickly fashion. "Looks that way," he mumbled thickly.

"Comin' quiet, aint yer?" asked the other.

William O'Brien, quite unnoticed on his window-sill, caught his breath. This man was like *Stanwood Stillings*; therefore like *Stanwood Stillings* would he act. This meekness, this apparent bending humbly to superior force, merely covered quick and sure mental plottings. *Stanwood Stillings* had been in many fixes worse than this and had always come forth triumphant—and then some. Something exciting was due to happen right away—a glorious rough-house, maybe, or even gun-play. On his window-sill William gripped his hands tight together and waited in a fever of suspense.

"Take the woman down to the carriage," the man called John ordered. "Do it quiet as yer can. No need stirrin' up the neighborhood and makin' a show of it."

Here, surely, was where the thing would begin. William waited, but the man to whom he had delivered the package made no move. Disappointment gripped hard at O'Brien's quick-beating heart. Why, *Stanwood Stillings* would have thrown off his captors, floored them right and left, and triumphantly led out *Helene* over their prostrate bodies. This man stood with down-hung head and let them lead her away with never so much as the movement of a muscle.

"Aw, gee!" muttered the watcher. "Whyn't he do something! Whyn't he git busy. Say, he must be the silly dope to let 'em use him like that."

He clenched his hands till the nails bit into his palms. He felt that he himself would have shown up much better in a similar predicament. At least, he would have made a try.

The man who held the captive turned him over to the other man in plain clothes, and, taking the engraver's plate with him, went over to the window.

He examined it long and earnestly. Then he turned to the captive.

"Con, yer never done this," he said.

The other made no reply.

"Yer aint clever enough," the man by the window continued. "Yer got some one doin' it for yer."

Still there was no reply.

"And yer've got the plate of a buffalo-ten, somewhere. You're the one that's pushin' that stuff, too."

He turned suddenly on his heel and shot a searching glance at the cowering form by the packing-case.

"Where is that plate?" he shot out quickly.

The drooping shoulders stiffened. A sardonic grin flexed the taut muscles about the mouth. "Find it," he challenged.

William O'Brien felt an overweening desire at that moment to vent a cheer. At last the man, as was eminently fitting, measured up somewhat to the standards of the redoubtable *Mr. Stillings*.

"I'm goin' to find it, Con," said the

man by the window calmly. "You're sure the wise boy, all right. Lookin' for somethin' of course. Well, I want that plate and I want to know who done this engravin'. What'll yer come across with them two pieces of information for?"

The other man pondered. "What'll yer offer for 'em, Cap?" he asked, the sardonic smile still on his lips.

"Yer in bad, Con, anyway," said the other. "Yer headed for a nice long bit in the pen'. Come across with what I ask and I'll promise yer yer wont get but three years."

"Honest to God, hope to die, Cap?"

"I never went back on a gun yet, did I?" said the other sharply. "Now, who done this engravin' and where's that buffalo-ten plate? Yer got to open up right now. This offer don't hold good forever."

William O'Brien clenched his small hands yet tighter. *Stanwood Stillings* had been in an analogous position. This man would undoubtedly do as *Stanwood Stillings* had done. He would draw himself to his full height, square his shoulders, let the fire come into his eyes and exclaim: "Never, never! Not if I die a thousand deaths and suffer a million tortures will I tell this thing!"

Yes, even now his shoulders were straightening; even now there was a flash in the eyes; he turned to the man by the window. William Redmond Parnell knew just what he would say, and he gloried in it.

Then, as in some horrible nightmare, he heard that thick voice saying: "All right, Cap. Yer've always been square. Yer aint never passed no double cross that I ever heard of. Red Foley done that engravin' and he's got the buffalo-ten plate. Yer can git him right off down to 163 Battery St."

On the window-sill, there was a choking, spluttering sound. Something in William Redmond's head seemed to give way with a snap. Waves of red swept coursing before his eyes. Something in his throat seemed strangling him.

After that, for a few moments he was quite unaware what he did; he was unaware that he slid off the sill, staggered across the room, flew at the

lounging man there, and bit and kicked and thumped and tore in a veritable Berserker rage.

"Yer squealer!" he screamed. "Yer dub! Yer mutt! Yer measly peacher!"

"What's all this?" asked the man by the window, stepping forward and yanking the raging William away.

"Aw, that's only the kid that brought that plate up from Foley this mornin'," said Connors sullenly.

"This aint no place for you, young feller," said the man who held William off his quarry, but he said it not unkindly. "Yer better take a run back downtown."

But even as he led the overwrought William to the door and cast him into the—to William's way of thinking—outer darkness, he turned to glance sharply and with more or less disgust at the cringing man in the center of the room.

"And maybe the kid aint so far off the truth in his remarks to you at that, Con," he said meaningly.

Once outside, from sheer disappointment, rather than from the excitement of the past few moments, O'Brien began to sniffle. By the time he reached the corner of Colton St. and stood waiting for a downtown car, what with the strain and the bitter disillusionment of it all, he began to shake with sobs.

A kindly-disposed old lady, seeing him thus, with the tears streaming down his freckled face, sought to assuage his grief.

"What's the matter, little boy?" she asked, laying a gentle hand on his heaving shoulder. "Have you lost something?"

William Redmond Parnell O'Brien shot up at her a tearful glare.

"Lost somethin'?" he hissed. "Aw, gee! Wouldn't that make yer hate yerself. Say, Grammer, go chase yer shadder round the block and make a noise like lettin' me alone, will yer?"

Far be it from us to delve morbidly into the seamier side of life, but truth is a most valuable asset, even sometimes, paradoxically enough, in fiction. And the truth of the matter is that William Redmond Parnell O'Brien had a vocabulary—a vocabulary which was termed by some of the other A. D. T.'s at the office, a "beaut." In the stress of the moment he turned loose the full, complete and unexpurgated vocabulary upon the shocked and startled old lady, who retreated precipitately down the street with her fingers stuffed in her ears and a look of unutterable horror upon her kindly old face.

"Lost somethin'!" William grunted disgustedly, as he stepped out to hail his car. "Wouldn't that just about crack yer in two?"

But at that, A. D. T. Three Hundred and Seventy-something, although he perhaps did not realize it, had suffered a serious loss. He had just lost some of those brilliant but misleading misconceptions of life, which the more sophisticated of us are prone to term ideals.

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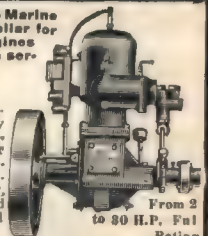
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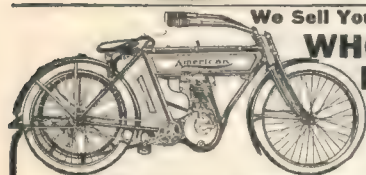
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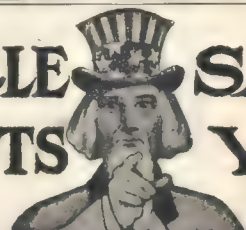
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Irvine K. Mott, M. D., of Cincinnati, Ohio, well and favorably known in that city as a learned physician—a graduate of the Cincinnati Pulte Medical College, and afterward received clinical instructions abroad, believes he has discovered a remedy to successfully treat Bright's Disease, Diabetes and other Kidney troubles, either in their first, intermediate or last stages. Dr. Mott says: "My method aims to arrest the disease, even though it has destroyed most of the kidneys, and thereby preserves intact that portion not yet destroyed. The medicines I use are intended to neutralize the poisons that form a toxin that destroys the cells in the tubes in the kidneys."



The Evening Post, one of the leading daily papers of Cincinnati, Ohio, hearing of Dr. Mott's success, asked if he would be willing to give a public test to demonstrate his faith in his treatment and prove its merit by treating five persons suffering from Bright's Disease and Diabetes, free of charge, the Post to select the cases.

Dr. Mott accepted the conditions, and twelve persons were selected. After a most critical chemical analysis and microscopic examination had been made, five out of the twelve were decided upon. These cases were placed under Dr. Mott's care and reports published each week in the Post. In three months all were discharged by Dr. Mott as cured. The persons treated gained their normal weight, strength and appetite, and were able to resume their usual work. Anyone who desires to read the details of this public test can obtain copies by sending to Dr. Mott for them.

This public demonstration gave Dr. Mott an international reputation that has brought him into correspondence with people all over the world, and several noted Europeans are numbered among those who have taken his treatment and been cured, as treatment can be administered effectively by mail.

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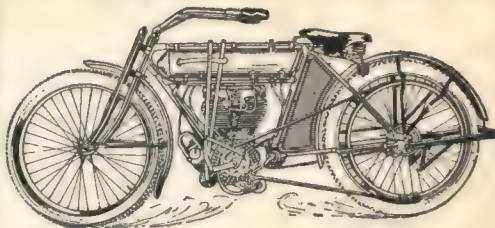
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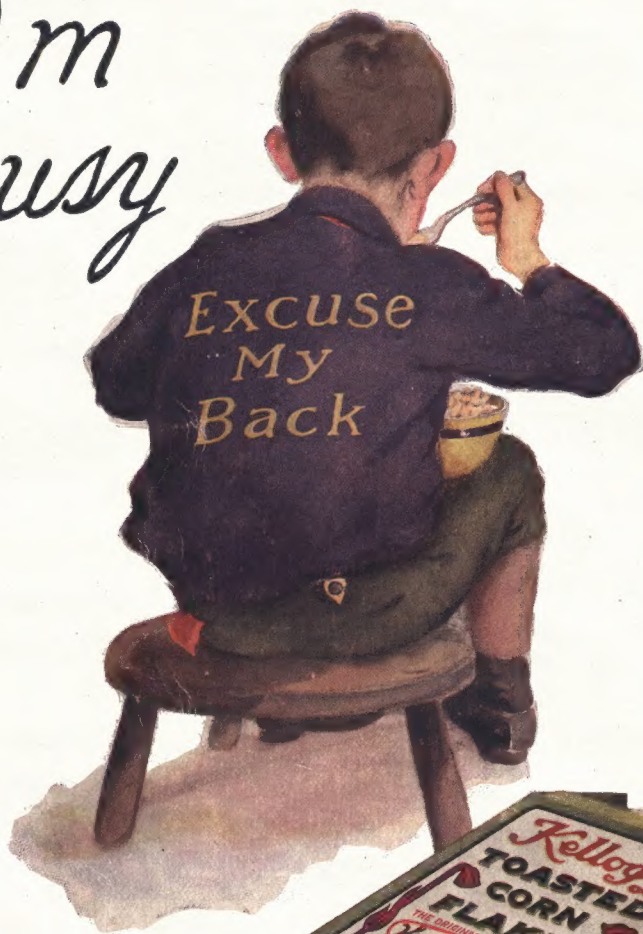
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